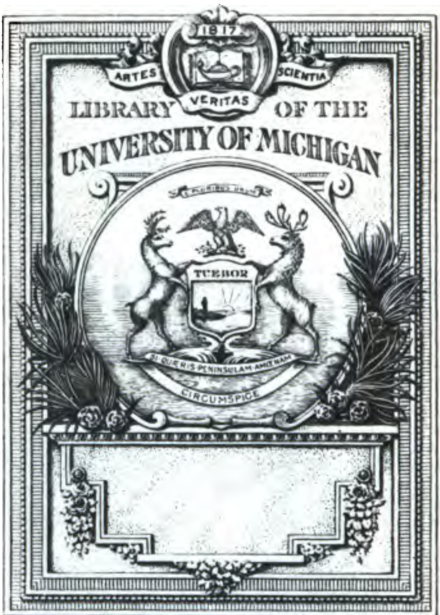


Richard Pemberton Junr. Esqre.

This poem is attributed to
Mr. Wilkie by Mr. Blair in
his Lecture on Epic poetry.
Vol 3d.


1817
ARTES
SCIENTIA
VERITAS
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
TUEBOR
SI QUÆRIS PENINSULAM AMŒNAM
CIRCUMSPICE

Wilkie, William

THE

EPIGONIAD.

A

POEM.

IN NINE BOOKS.

Nam veluti pueris absinthia tetra medentes
Cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum
Contingunt mellis dulci, flavoque liquore,
Ut puerorum ætas improvida ludificetur
Labrorum tenus, interea perpotet amarum
Absinthi laticem, deceptaque non capiatur;
Sed potius tali facto recreata valescat.
Sic ego —— LUCRET. lib. iv.

EDINBURGH:
Printed by HAMILTON, BALFOUR, & NEILL.
M,DCC,LVII.

PREFACE.

AS there is no class of writers more freely censured than Poets, and that by judges of all sorts, competent and incompetent: I shall attempt to answer some objections that may be made to the following Poem, by persons not sufficiently acquainted with Epic poetry, and the rules upon which it ought to be formed.

THE beauties of the piece, if it has any, shall be left to be discovered by every reader for himself. This is his undoubted privilege; and I have no intention to break in upon it: neither would it be of any advantage to do so; for poetical beauties, if they are real, will make themselves observed, and have their full effect without a comment.

SOME will object to the choice of the subject, That it is taken from the history of an age and nation, the particular manners of which are not now well known, and therefore cannot be accurately described. This objection will appear to be of little weight, when we consider that the fact upon which it proceeds is so far from being strictly true, that there are

none

none who have any tolerable ſhare of claſſical learning, that are not better acquainted with the manners and cuſtoms of the heroic ages, than with thoſe of their own country, at the diſtance of a few centuries. Neither is this knowledge of antient manners confined to the learned; the vulgar themſelves, from the books of Moſes, and other accounts of the firſt periods of the Jewiſh ſtate, are ſufficiently inſtructed in the cuſtoms of the earlieſt times, to be able to reliſh any work where theſe are juſtly repreſented. With what favor, for inſtance, has Mr. Pope's' tranſlation of the *Iliad* been received by perſons of all conditions? and how much is it commonly preferred to the *Fairy Queen*, a poem formed upon manners of a much more modern caſt. But, ſuppoſing the fact upon which the objection proceeds to be true, and that the cuſtoms and manners peculiar to the times from which the ſubject of the poem is taken are not now well underſtood, I do not apprehend, that even with this conceſſion, the objection amounts to any thing conſiderable; for manners are to be diſtinguiſhed into two kinds, univerſal and particular. Univerſal manners, are thoſe which ariſe from the original frame and conſtitution of the human nature, and which conſequently

ly are the ſame in all nations and periods of the world. Particular manners, on the other hand, conſiſt of ſuch cuſtoms and modes of behaviour, as proceed from the influence of partial cauſes, and that ſhift and vary as thoſe cauſes do upon which they depend. To make myſelf underſtood by an example; it is agreeable to common or univerſal manners, to revenge an injury; but particular manners, in ordinary caſes, determine the way of doing it. For great offences, an Italian poiſons his enemy; a Spaniard ſtabs him over the ſhoulder; and a Frenchman ſeeks ſatisfaction in a duel. From this example, it will be eaſy to ſee that particular manners ought to appear but very little, either in Epic poetry, Tragedy, or any other of the higher kinds of poetical compoſition; for they are vulgar, and depend upon cuſtom: but great paſſions and high characters reject ordinary forms; and therefore muſt, upon every occaſion, break thro' all the common methods both of ſpeech and behaviour. Tho' antient manners, therefore, were not ſo preciſely known as they are, I ſhould imagine, that a ſtory taken from the accounts which we have of the heroic ages, might very well ſerve for the ſubject of an Epic poem, and have all the advantages ne-

ceſſary

ceſſary in reſpect of that ſpecies of compoſition.

It may likewiſe be alledged, That I have done wrong in chooſing for my ſubject a piece of hiſtory which has no connection with preſent affairs; and that, if I had done otherwiſe, my work would have been more intereſting and uſeful.

This objection, ſeemingly a very material one, admits, notwithſtanding, of an eaſy anſwer, *viz.* that ſubjects for Epic poetry ought always to be taken from periods too early to fall within the reach of true hiſtory. And, if this rule is ſhewn to be eſſential, which I ſhall attempt to do in what follows, it will be found to be impoſſible that any ſubject proper for that kind of writing ſhould have a connection with preſent affairs. The proper buſineſs of Epic poetry is to extend our ideas of human perfection, or, as the critics expreſs it, to excite admiration. In order to do this in any tolerable degree, characters muſt be magnified, and accommodated, rather to our notions of heroic greatneſs, than to the real ſtate of human nature. There appears a certain littleneſs in all men when truly known, which checks admiration, and confines it to very narrow limits; heroes,

themſelves,

themſelves, tho' poſſeſſed of the greateſt qualities, are, in moſt circumſtances of their condition, ſo much upon a level with the ordinary run of mankind, that ſuch as have an opportunity of being intimately acquainted with them, do not admire them at the ſame rate that others do, who view them only at a diſtance. The common conditions of humanity leſſen every man; and there are many little circumſtances inſeparably connected with our ſtate of being, which we cannot eaſily reconcile with our idea of Epaminondas, Plato, Scipio, or Cæſar. From all this it plainly appears, that admiration claims for its object ſomething ſuperior to mere humanity; and therefore ſuch poems as have it for their end to excite admiration, ought to celebrate thoſe perſons only that never have been treated of by regular hiſtorians. For hiſtory gives to all things their juſt and natural dimenſions; and, if it ſhould interfere with poetical fiction, would effectually confute thoſe beautiful legends which are invented to raiſe our ideas of character and action, above the ſtandard at which experience has fixed them.

Let it be obſerved, as a further confirmation of the maxim which I am eſtabliſhing, that there is in our minds a principle which leads

leads us to admire paſt times, eſpecially thoſe which are moſt remote from our own. This prejudice is ſtrong in us; and, without being directed or aſſiſted by art, forms in the mere vulgar of all countries, the moſt extravagant notions of the ſtature, ſtrength, and other heroic qualities of their remote anceſtors. This prejudice ſo favourable to poetical fiction, true hiſtory effectually deſtroys; and therefore Poets, that they may have the advantage of it, ought to celebrate perſons and events only that are of ſo great antiquity, that they cannot be remembered with any degree of certainty and exactneſs.

But, in place of a thouſand arguments to this purpoſe, let us only conſider the machinery which muſt be employed in an Epic poem: how heaven and hell muſt both of them be put in motion, and brought into the action; how events altogether out of the common road of human affairs, and no ways countenanced either by reaſon or experience, muſt be offered to men's imaginations, ſo as to be admitted for true. Let us conſider all this, and it will appear, that there is nothing which Poets ought more carefully to avoid, than interfering with ſuch regular and well vouched accounts of things as would effectually

ally confute their fable, and make the meanest reader reject it with contempt. This is a point of prudence which no poet has yet neglected with impunity. Lucan, according to his usual rashness, has taken, for the subject of an Epic poem, one of the most known events which he could have pitched upon in the whole series of human affairs; and, in order to distinguish himself from a mere historian, is often under a necessity of starting from his subject, and employing the whole force of a very lively and fruitful invention in unnecessary descriptions and trifling digressions. This, besides other inconveniencies of greater moment, gives such an appearance of labor and straining to his whole performance, as takes much from the merit of it, with all who have any notion of ease, majesty and simplicity in writing. He, and all other poets who have fallen into the same error, find always this disadvantage attending it, that the true and fictitious parts of their work refuse to unite, and standing as it were at a distance, upon terms of mutual aversion, reproach each other with their peculiar defects. Fiction accuses truth of narrowness and want of dignity; and this again represents the other as vain and extravagant. Spencer, who, in his *Fairy Queen*,

treats of matters, not only within the ſphere of regular hiſtory, but even of the tranſactions of his own time, in order to avoid the inconveniencies which he knew to be almoſt inſeparable from ſuch an attempt, covers his ſtory with a vail of allegory, that few of his readers are able to penetrate. This ſtratagem leaves him at full liberty in the exerciſe of his invention; but he pays, in my opinion, too dear for that privilege, by ſacrificing to it all the weight and authority which a mixture of received tradition and real geography would have added to his fable. Milton takes the ſubjects of both his great poems from true hiſtory, yet does not ſucceed the worſe upon that account. But it is to be remembered, that his chief actors are divine and angelical beings, not men; and that it is the human nature only which ſuffers by a juſt repreſentation, and loſes in point of dignity, when truly known. Beſides, the hiſtorical circumſtances upon which he builds are ſo few, and of ſo extraordinary a nature, that they are eaſily accommodated to poetical fiction; and therefore, inſtead of limiting him, and ſetting bounds to his invention, they ſerve only to countenance and give a degree of credibility to whatever he pleaſes to feign.

Shakeſpear may likewiſe be quoted as an exception to the general rule, who takes the ſubjects of many of his pieces from periods of the Engliſh hiſtory not very remote, and, notwithſtanding, ſucceeds remarkably in exciting admiration. That Shakeſpear makes us admire his heroes is undeniable; and no man of common ſenſe will ever pretend to aſſert, that real characters of great men, touched up and brightened by a poetical fancy, will not very naturally excite admiration. But there are different degrees of this paſſion, as well as of all others: and it is evident, that the degree of it which Shakeſpear intends to raiſe, is not equal to that which Homer aims at, and the other writers of the Epic tribe. We admire no character in Shakeſpear's works more than that of Henry V.; but the idea which Homer gives us of Achilles is ſtill nobler and more auguſt. The Tragedian mixes ſo much of the ordinary man in the character of his hero, that we become too familiar with him to admire him in a high degree: for in thoſe very pieces in which he is repreſented as performing his moſt remarkable exploits, he is often found at his leiſure hours amuſing himſelf with a knot of humoriſts, pickpockets and buffoons. I do not pretend to cenſure Shakeſpear

Shakeſpear for this conduct; becauſe it is not the buſineſs of a Tragedian to make us admire, but to intereſt our other affections: and, to make his heroes very much objects of admiration, would poſſibly be one of the greateſt errors that an author of that kind could fall into: for the principle of compaſſion, to which Tragedy is peculiarly addreſſed, is incompatible with high admiration; and a man, in order either to be loved or pitied, muſt appear with evident ſymptoms of the weakneſſes common to the reſt of the human kind. It is our own image in diſtreſs which afflicts us; and we never pity one under calamities, who is not weak enough to be moved by them. Homer, upon this account, never attempts to excite pity, but from ſuch private and domeſtic diſtreſſes as ſhew his heroes in the light of ordinary men. Sophocles too, from a juſt apprehenſion that the heroic paſſion interferes with the proper ſpirit of Tragedy, and is unfavorable to it, leſſens on purpoſe the great characters which he introduces, and ſtrips them of more than half their dignity. Tho' therefore Shakeſpear makes us admire his heroes as much as a Tragedian ought to do, and even more in ſome inſtances than the rules of art would juſtify; yet, as the degree of admiration

ration which he excites is leſs by far, than that which Epic poetry aims at, it may well be raiſed from ſubjects that are ſtrictly hiſtorical, tho' the higher degrees of that paſſion cannot. Was my judgment of ſufficient authority in matters of criticiſm, I would have it underſtood as a rule, That the ſubjects of Epic poetry ſhould be taken from tradition only: that Tragedy ſhould keep within the limits of true hiſtory; and that Comedy, without meddling at all with paſt times, ſhould expoſe vice and folly in recent inſtances, and from living examples. That part of the rule which regards Epic poetry, is ſufficiently juſtified from what has been already ſaid; and, concerning Tragedy, I have likewiſe obſerved, that it ought not to exalt its greateſt characters above the ſtandard of real life. From this it will follow, that it may be ſtrictly hiſtorical without loſing any real advantage, and attain to its full perfection without the aſſiſtance of fable. I believe it will be eaſily allowed, that where truth and fiction are equally ſubſervient to the purpoſes of poetry, the firſt ought always to be preferred; for true hiſtory carries a weight and authority with it, which ſeldom attends ſtories that are merely fictitious, and has many advantages beſides for intereſting our affections above

the

the legends of remote antiquity. But as Tragedy ſhould never go ſo far back as the fabulous ages, neither ſhould it, in my opinion, approach too near to preſent times; for, tho' it does not aim at raiſing and gratifying the paſſion of admiration, yet it has a degree of dignity to maintain, which it would endanger by meddling with events too recent, and characters too particularly remembered. Comedy, on the other hand, and indeed every ſpecies of ſatire whatſoever, ought to attack living characters only, and the vices and follies of preſent times. That imperfection which appears in every thing when viewed near at hand, a circumſtance ſo unfavorable to the genius of Epic poetry and Tragedy, falls in preciſely with that of Comedy, a kind of writing that has no dignity to ſupport, which points always at what is ridiculous, and marks its objects with characters of littleneſs and contempt. We naturally admire paſt times, and reverence the dead; and conſequently are not ſo much diſpoſed to laugh at fools, who have already finiſhed their parts, and retired, as at fools who are yet upon the ſtage. The antient Comedy of the Greeks, which proceeded upon this maxim, was certainly, upon that account, the moſt perfect ſpecies of ſatire that ever

was invented. Homer, as he exceeded all other poets in merit, had likewise the advantage of them in point of good fortune; the condition of the age in which he wrote gave him an opportunity of celebrating, in his poems, events, which tho' they were in his days of no great antiquity, and consequently the more interesting, yet had fallen, thro' the want of authentic records, into so happy a degree of obscurity, that he was at full liberty to feign concerning them what he pleased, without any danger of confutation. This is an advantage which succeeding poets could not boast of; and therefore have found themselves under a necessity, either of taking their subjects from remote antiquity, as I have done, or (which, in my opinion, is worse) of attempting to mix fable with true history, which never can be done with success.

The mythology in the following poem will probably give offence to some readers, who will think it indecent for a Christian to write in such a manner as to suppose the truth of a Heathen religion. They will therefore think, that it would have been better, either to have introduced no religious system at all, or to have chosen such a subject as would

have

have admitted of the true. I ſhall endeavour to anſwer this objection, by eſtabliſhing two maxims directly oppoſite to what is propoſed in the preceeding alternative, and ſhew not only that divine beings are neceſſary characters in an Epic poem, but likewiſe that it is highly improper to introduce the true God into a work of that nature. If theſe two points are fully made out, the force of the objection will be taken away. As to the firſt of them, let us again conſider the end which Epic poetry propoſes to itſelf: it aims at exciting admiration, by ſetting before us images of whatever is great and noble in the human character: it is neceſſary for this purpoſe that a poet ſhould give his heroes, not only all thoſe intrinſic qualities which make men admired, but that he ſhould magnify them likewiſe by a ſkilful management of outward circumſtances. We do not form our notions either of perſons or things from their real qualities only; things that are of a foreign nature, and merely acceſſory, have as great an influence as theſe in determining both our approbation or diſlike. This obſervation ſhews the importance of mythology to Epic poetry; for no circumſtance can render a perſon of greater

conſequence

consequence in the eye of the world, than an opinion that the gods regard him with a peculiar degree of attention, and are much interested in all that relates to him. If people are once considered as the favorites of heaven, or instruments chosen for the accomplishment of its important purposes; poets may tell of them what great things they please, without seeming to exaggerate, or say any thing that exceeds the bounds of probability. Homer was certainly of this opinion, when he ascribed, to his heroes, valor and other great qualities in so immoderate a degree: for, had the gods never interposed in any of the events which he celebrates; had his chief actors been no ways connected with them, either in point of favor or consanguinity, and represented, at the same time, as performing the high exploits ascribed to them, in place of being applauded as the first of poets, he would only have been censured as the falsest and most credulous of historians. This argument in favor of poetical mythology, with another which might be taken from the advantage it brings in point of ornament, and a third from its use in allegory, has determined almost all the writers who have followed the Epic or heroic style, to allow it a place in their compositions:

ſuch of them as have taken their ſubject from Greek or Roman ſtory, have adopted the mythology of Homer; and the reſt, in celebrating more modern heroes, have, in place of that, made uſe of the true religion, corrupted by an unnatural mixture of northern ſuperſtition and Grecian fable. From a practice therefore ſo univerſal, we may juſtly infer, that poets have looked upon mythology as a thing eſſential to their art, and what it cannot well be without.

It may be alledged, after all that has been ſaid, That, to bring gods into Epic poetry, is inconvenient on many accounts; that it prevents a proper diſplay of character in the human actors, turning them all into ſo many machines, to be moved and guided by the immediate impulſes of deity: that it breaks in upon the order of natural cauſes, and renders all art, either in the plan or conduct of a work, ſuperfluous and unneceſſary. If what this objection ſuppoſes were true, and that the mixing of gods with men in the action of an Epic poem, neceſſarily turned the whole into miracle; if it was an unavoidable conſequence of this method, that the human actors ſhould be governed in all that they do by divine impulſe determining them, without regard to their natural

tural characters, and the probable motives which ought to influence them: in ſhort, if mythology could have no place in a poem, but at the expence of manners, order, connection, and every other thing that can render a work either beautiful or inſtructive, it would be an argument of ſuch weight againſt it, as nothing that could be alledged in its favor would be able to counterbalance. But the objection is by no means well founded; for, tho' there may be an indiſcreet application of mythology, productive of all the diſadvantages that have been mentioned; yet it is obvious, both from reaſon and experience, that mythology may be managed in ſuch a manner as to be attended with none of them. And this will appear from a very obvious example: The greateſt part of mankind in every age, has believed that gods and ſuperior beings govern and direct the courſe of human affairs. Many individuals, and even whole nations, have thought that all the actions and events of our lives are predetermined by an over-ruling power, and that we ſuffer the control of an irreſiſtible neceſſity in all that we do: yet this opinion never changes the moral feelings of ſuch as entertain it, and their judgment of characters and actions; they love and hate, approve and diſapprove,

disapprove, admire and despise, in the same manner as others do who believe that men are absolutely free, and that their final determinations proceed only from themselves. But when it is understood, that people act without consciousness, or that the organs of their bodies are not under the dominion of their own wills, but actuated by some other being without their consent; in short, when mere physical necessity is substituted in place of moral, all idea of character, all sense of approbation and disapprobation immediately ceases. From this observation, the truth of which no body will dispute, it is easy to judge in what cases the interposition of gods in the action of a poem will present a proper display of the human characters, and when not. Volition, as appears by the example now given, is that upon which all our moral ideas are founded: so long then as volition is exerted, there is a character, and, when that ceases, the character is lost. If therefore the deities in a poem are employed in animating and deterring the heroes, only by suggesting such motives as are proper to influence their wills; such interposition by no means interferes with the display of character, but rather favors it; for the quality of every mind may be known from the

motives

motives by which it is determined; and Minerva's prevailing with Pandarus to be guilty of a piece of treachery, by ſuggeſting that Paris would reward him for it, diſcovered the venality of his temper as much as if he had done the ſame action from a like motive occurring to himſelf.

Poets often make the gods infuſe an uncommon degree of vigor into their heroes, for anſwering ſome great occaſion, and add to the grace and dignity of their figure. Sometimes they make a ſecond rate hero the firſt in a particular action, and, with their aſſiſtance, he diſtinguiſhes himſelf above ſuch as are at other times more remarkable for valor and ſucceſs: all this is ſo agreeable to what happens naturally, and from mere mechanical cauſes, that we forget the gods, and interpret what happens as if they had not interpoſed at all. For every body knows, that when people are rouſed to any remarkable exertion of force, they become ſtronger than they are at other times, and that, when in this manner the ſpirits riſe to an uncommon height, the whole body acquires new graces. Valor is not a fixt and permanent quality, nor is it found in any one always in the ſame degree. Plutarch obſerves, that of all the virtues it

exerts

exerts itself most irregularly, and rises by fits like a divine inspiration. The sense which every man has of these things, makes him look upon the interposition of gods in such cases as a mythological way of expressing what is merely natural, and allow such as perform the great actions in a poem to possess the whole merit of them. It never lessens our opinion of Hector's valor, for instance, that Apollo often assists him; nor do we think Ulysses less prudent, because he is guided by the influence of Minerva. We have as clear impressions of those, and the other Homeric characters, as we have of any characters whatsoever, and discern their limits and distinguishing marks as clearly, as if they had acted altogether of themselves. That superior beings should be employed in governing the events of things, and interposing by thunder, earthquakes, inundations, pestilences, and the like, can never be thought unnatural in poetry, by any who believe that Providence actually manages the affairs of the world by such means. It belongs to men to design and act, but to Heaven alone to determine events. Tho' a poet, therefore, should represent an army weaker and worse conducted, prevailing, in consequence of that kind of interposition which has

been

been mentioned, over another, evidently better and ſtronger; there would be nothing unnatural in ſuch an account, or contrary to what is often experienced in real affairs.

After all that has been ſaid, it muſt be owned, that if gods are brought in upon ſlight occaſions, and for trifling purpoſes; if they are put upon working miracles in order to cover blunders, either in the plan or execution of a poem, and employed in cutting ſuch knots as the author himſelf has not the ſkill or patience to untie; it muſt be owned, I ſay, that this is a very wrong application of mythology, and attended with all the diſadvantages which the objection mentions. It is a ſtratagem, which, if often practiſed, would teach the reader at laſt to diſregard all appearances, and, when the moſt important periods of affairs were approaching, to remain quite ſecure and unintereſted, truſting that a god would always be at hand in time of need to manage every thing as the poet would have it, and put all to rights by the ſhorteſt and moſt effectual methods. I have conſidered this objection at greater length, becauſe at firſt view it appears very plauſible; and ſhall proceed to what remains, after I have taken notice of another, which has likewiſe ſome appearance of force.

force. It will be thought inconvenient, as it is the design of Epic poetry to raise and dignify human characters, that gods should appear with men in the same scenes of action. It will be alledged, that in this case the divine persons will necessarily overtop the human, lessen them by a comparison, and consequently produce an effect directly opposite to the chief scope of that kind of writing. This objection, however plausible, does not seem to be favored by experience; at least I never found in any instance, that the splendor of the divine characters in a poem eclipsed the human. Besides, this is what cannot easily happen; for, let us suppose two parties of boys engaged in some trial, either of force or skill, and that a few men take part in the debate, dividing themselves between the opposite sides, and assisting them against each other, would the exploits of the full grown men, however remarkable, lessen those of the boys? by no means; for, things that are confessedly unequal, never come into competition, and therefore cannot be either lessened or magnified by appearing together. Are we less disposed to admire the valor of Achilles, because it is understood he was not a match for Jupiter? or the sagacity of Ulysses, because his penetration

tion was not equal to that of Minerva? But there is one circumſtance which renders it abſolutely impoſſible for the gods in Epic poetry to eclipſe the men in point of heroiſm; and it is this, That the gods are immortal, and conſequently cannot exert that in which heroiſm chiefly conſiſts, *viz.* the contempt of death. Homer, in order to give his deities as much of that quality as poſſible, has made them vulnerable and ſuſceptible of pain; a freedom which has ſhocked ſome of the critics, who did not attend to the reaſon of his doing ſo. But Homer was too good a judge of propriety, not to be ſenſible that no perſon could appear with advantage in military actions who riſked nothing by doing ſo; and that ſtature, force, magnificent armor, and even the higheſt atchievements, will never conſtitute the heroic character, where patience and a contempt of danger have no opportunity of appearing. It is this circumſtance which gives the mortals in Epic poetry a manifeſt advantage over the immortals; and Mars, when uſhered into the field with all the pomp and magnificence of Homeric deſcription, is an object leſs to be admired than Diomed, Ajax, and many others who combat bravely, tho' conſcious of mortality. Homer, who has ma-

naged his great characters with the truest judgment and strictest attention to circumstances, takes care to have Achilles early informed that he was to perish at Troy, else he might seem too conscious of safety, from his matchless valor and the armor which he wore, to be great in that which is most to be admired, the contempt of death, when the danger of it is imminent. It must be acknowledged, that in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the persons in the machinery over-top the human characters, and that the heroes of that poem are all of them immortals: but then it is to be remembered, that *Paradise Lost* is a work altogether irregular; that the subject of it is not Epic, but Tragic; and that Adam and Eve are not designed to be objects of admiration, but of pity: it is Tragic in its plot, and Epic in its dress and machinery: as a Tragedy, it does not fall under the present question; and as an Epic poem, it evades it likewise, by a circumstance very uncommon, *viz*. that in that part of it which is properly Epic, there are no human persons at all.

I have in this manner endeavoured to prove that mythology is necessary to an Epic poem, and that the chief objections to the use of it are of little consequence. I proceed to establish

blish the other proposition which I mentioned, and shew, that the true God ought not to be brought into a work of that nature. And if this proposition can be made out, it will easily appear from it and the preceeding one taken together, that Poets are under a necessity of having recourse to a false theology; and that they are not to be blamed for doing what the nature of Epic poetry on the one hand, and respect to the true religion on the other, renders necessary and unavoidable. For proving the point in question, I need only observe, that no person can appear with advantage in poetry, who is not represented according to the form and condition of a man. This art addresses itself chiefly to the imagination, a faculty which apprehends nothing in the way of character that is not human, and according to the analogy of that nature of which we ourselves are conscious. But it would be equally impious and absurd to represent the Deity in this manner, and to contrive for him a particular character, and method of acting, agreeable to the prejudices of weak and ignorant mortals. In the early ages of the church, he thought fit to accommodate himself, by such a piece of condescension, to the notions and apprehensi-

ons

ons of his creatures: but it would be indecent in any man to use the same freedom, and do that for God, which he only has a right to do for himself. The author of *Paradise Lost* has offended notoriously in this respect; and, tho' no encomiums are too great for him as a poet, he is justly chargeable with impiety, for presuming to represent the Divine Nature, and the mysteries of religion, according to the narrowness of human prejudice: his dialogues between the Father and the Son; his employing a Being of infinite wisdom in discussing the subtleties of school divinity; the sensual views which he gives of the happiness of heaven, admitting into it, as a part, not only real eating and drinking, but another kind of animal pleasure too by no means more refined: these, and such like circumstances, tho' perfectly poetical, and agreeable to the genius of an art which adapts every thing to the human model; are, at the same time, so inconsistent with truth, and the exalted ideas which we ought to entertain of divine things, that to publish them in the manner that has been mentioned, must be highly offensive to all such as have just impressions of religion, and would not choose to see a system of doctrine revealed from heaven, reduced to a state of conformity with

Heathen

Heathen superstition: True theology ought not to be used in an Epic poem, for another reason, of no less weight than that which has been mentioned, viz. That the human characters which it represents should never be formed upon a perfect moral plan, but have their piety, (for instance) tinctured with superstition, and their general behavior influenced by affection, passion and prejudice. This will be thought a violent paradox, by such as do not know that imperfect characters interest us more than perfect ones, and that we are doubly instructed when we see in one and the same example, both what we ought to follow, and what we ought to avoid. Accordingly Horace, in his Epistle to Lollius, where he bestows the highest encomiums upon the *Iliad*, as a work which delineated vice and virtue better than the writings of the most celebrated philosophers, says of it, notwithstanding, That it is taken up in describing the animosities of foolish kings and infatuated nations. To go to the bottom of this matter, it will be proper to observe, that men are capable of two sorts of character, which may be distinguished by the names of natural and artificial. The natural character implies all those feelings,

passions,

passions, desires and opinions which men have from nature and common experience, independent of speculation and moral refinement. A person of this character looks upon outward prosperity as a real good, and considers the calamities of life as real evils; loves his friends, hates his enemies, admires his superiors, assumes with respect to his inferiors, and stands upon terms of rivalship with his equals; in short, is governed by all those passions and opinions that possess the hearts and determine the actions of ordinary men. The force and magnitude of this character is in proportion to the strength of these natural dispositions; and its virtue consists in having the generous and beneficent ones predominant. As to that sort of character, again, which I distinguished by the name of artificial; it consists in a habit of mind formed by discipline, according to the cool and dispassionate dictates of reason. This character is highly moral, but, in my opinion, far less poetical than the other, by being less fit for interesting our affections, which are formed by the wise Author of our nature for embraceing beings of the same temper and complexion with ourselves, and who are marked with the common infirmities of the human nature.

nature. Persons of that high philosophic character which has been described, are too firm and unmoved, amidst the calamities they meet with, to excite much sympathy in others, and are too much superior to the sallies of passion and partial affection, the popular marks of generosity and greatness of mind, ever to be much admired by the bulk of mankind. If the most accomplished poet in the world should take a rigid philosopher for the chief character either of an Epic poem or a Tragedy, it is easy to conjecture what would be the success of such an attempt: the work would assume the character of its hero, and be cold, dispassionate and lifeless. There is, however, a species of panegyric proper for such sort of perfection, and it may be represented to advantage, either in history or prose dialogue, but will never be generally interesting. Plato, in his apology of Socrates, deceives us, as Mr. Addison likewise does in his Tragedy of Cato: for both of them attempt to persuade us, that we are affected with the contemplation of unshaken fortitude, while we are only sympathizing with suffering innocence. The tenderness of humanity appearing thro' the hardness of the philosophic character, is that which affects us in both

both instances, and not that unconquered greatness of mind, which occasions rather wonder and astonishment than genuine affection.

FROM what has been said, it is easy to infer, that the great characters, both in Epic poetry and Tragedy, ought not to be formed upon a perfect moral plan; and therefore heroes themselves must often be represented as acting from such motives, and governed by such affections as impartial reason cannot approve of: but it would be highly indecent to make a being, whom religion teaches us to consider as perfect, enter into the views of such persons, and exert himself in order to promote their extravagant enterprizes. This would be to bring down the infinite wisdom of God to the level of human folly, and to make him altogether such an one as ourselves.

A false theology, therefore, ought rather to be employed in poetical compositions than the true; for, as the superior beings which are introduced must of necessity be represented as assuming the passions and opinions of those whom they favor, it is surely safer to employ a set of imaginary beings for this purpose, than God himself, and the blessed angels, who ought always to be objects of our reverence.

THE

The same reasoning which leads to this conclusion, will likewise make us sensible, that among false religions, those which are least connected with the true, ought, for the purposes of poetry, to be preferred; for the superstitions which priests and poets have built upon the Christian faith, dishonor it, and therefore should, if possible, be buried in oblivion. The antient Greek theology seems upon all accounts the fittest. It has no connection with the true system, and therefore may be treated with the greatest freedom, without indecency or ground of offence. It consists of a number of beautiful fables suited to the taste of the most lively and ingenious people that ever existed, and so much calculated to ravish and transport a warm imagination, that many poets in modern times, who proceeded upon a different theology, have notwithstanding been so bewitched with its charms, as to admit it into their works, tho' it clashed violently with the system which they had embraced. Milton is remarkable in this respect, and the more so, as his poem is altogether of a religious nature, and the subject of it taken from Holy Writ.

Some may possibly imagine, that the following work would have had greater merit, if it had offered to the world a set of cha-

racters altogether new, and a ſtory no ways connected with any thing that is already known. I own, that I am not of the ſame opinion, but perſuaded, on the contrary, that, to invent a ſtory quite new, with a catalogue of names never before heard of, would be an attempt of ſuch a nature, as could not be made with tolerable ſucceſs; for every man muſt be ſenſible, that the wonders which Epic poetry relates, will ſhock even the ignorant vulgar, and appear altogether ridiculous, if they are not founded upon ſomething which has already gained a degree of credit. Our firſt notions of things are taken from experience; and, tho' we may be brought to admit impreſſions, not only very different from what experience ſuggeſts, but even contrary to it, yet this is not to be done ſuddenly and at one attempt; ſuch, therefore, as would have their fictions favorably received, muſt lay it down as a rule, to accommodate what they feign to eſtabliſhed prejudices, and build upon ſtories which are already in ſome meaſure believed. With this precaution, they may go great lengths without appearing abſurd, but will ſoon ſhock the meaneſt underſtandings, if they neglect it. Had there been no fabulous accounts concerning the Trojan

expedition

expedition current in Greece and Aſia, at the time when Homer wrote, the ſtories which he tells, tho' the moſt beautiful that ever were invented, would have appeared to his co-temporaries altogether ridiculous, and never been admired, till antiquity had procured them credit, or a tradition been formed afterwards to vouch for them to the world; for, in matters of an extraordinary kind, not only reaſon, but even imagination, requires more than a ſingle teſtimony to ground its aſſent upon; and therefore, tho' I ſhould have invented a ſet of characters intirely new, and framed a ſtory for the ſubject of my poem no ways connected with any thing that has yet been heard of, and have been ſo happy in this attempt as to produce what would equal, in point of perfection, any of the moſt beautiful fables of antiquity; I would have wanted, notwithſtanding, what is abſolutely neceſſary in order to ſucceſs, *viz.* that credit which new invented fictions derive from their connexion with ſuch as are already received.

TRADITION is the beſt ground upon which fable can be built, not only becauſe it gives the appearance of reality to things that are merely fictitious, but likewiſe becauſe it ſupplies a poet with the moſt proper materials

for

for his invention to work upon. There are ſome fabulous ſtories that pleaſe more univerſally than others; and of this kind are the wonders which tradition reports; for they are accommodated to the affections and paſſions of the bulk of mankind, in the ſame manner as national proverbs are to their underſtandings. The ſtrict accommodation in both inſtances proceeds from the ſame cauſe, *viz.* that nothing of either ſort is the work of one man, or of one age, but of many. Traditions are not perfected by their firſt inventors, nor proverbs eſtabliſhed upon a ſingle authority. Proverbs derive their credit from the general conſent of mankind; and tradition is gradually corrected and improved in the hands of ſuch as tranſmit it to each other thro' a ſucceſſion of ages. In its firſt periods, it is a narrow thing, but extends itſelf afterwards, and, with the advantage of time and experiments often repeated, adapts itſelf ſo preciſely to the affections, paſſions and prejudices, natural to the human ſpecies, that it becomes at laſt perfectly agreeable to the feelings and ſentiments of every heart. No one man, therefore, can pretend to invent fables that will pleaſe ſo univerſally, as thoſe which are formed by the progreſs of popular

popular tradition. The faculties of any individual muſt be too narrow for that purpoſe, and have too much of a peculiar caſt to be capable of producing what will be ſo ſtrictly adapted to the common feelings and ſentiments of all. It is this ſort of perfection which pleaſes us in archæology, or the traditional accounts which we have of the origins of nations; for we are often more agreeably entertained with ſtories of that kind, tho' we know them to be abſolutely falſe, than with the juſteſt repreſentations of real events. But as tradition, while it continues in the hands of the people, muſt be but rude and diſagreeable in reſpect of its form, and have many things low and abſurd in it, neceſſary to be palliated or ſuppreſſed, it does not arrive at that perfection of which it is capable, till it comes under the care of the poets, and from them receives its laſt improvement. By means of this progreſs, tales that, in the mouths of their firſt inventors, were the moſt abſurd that can be imagined, the effects of mere ſuperſtition, ignorance and national prejudice, riſe up at laſt to aſtoniſh the world, and draw the admiration of all ages, in the form of an *Iliad* or *Odyſſey*. It is not the buſineſs of a poet, then, to make fable, but to form, correct, and improve

improve tradition: and it is to his following this method, that Homer undoubtedly owes his ſucceſs; for it is obvious to any one who conſiders his works with attention, that he only collected the various traditions that were current in his days, and reduced them to a ſyſtem. That infinite variety of independent ſtories which occur in his works, is a proof of this, told with ſo minute, and often ſo unneceſſary a detail of circumſtances, that it is eaſy to ſee that he followed accounts already current, and did not invent what he has recorded. I could as eaſily believe that Prometheus made a man of clay, and put life into him, or aſſent to any other of the moſt abſurd fictions of antiquity; I could even as ſoon be perſuaded that all that Homer has written is ſtrict matter of fact, as believe that any one mortal man was capable of inventing that infinite variety of hiſtorical circumſtances which occur in the works of that celebrated poet: for invention is by no means an eaſy thing; and to contrive a tale that will pleaſe univerſally is certainly one of the moſt difficult undertakings that can be imagined. Poets, therefore, have found themſelves under a neceſſity of truſting to ſomething more powerful than their own invention in this important

article,

article, *viz.* the joint endeavours of many, regulated and directed by the censure of ages.

WHAT has been said, is not only sufficient to justify me in forming my poem upon historical circumstances already known, and introducing characters which the reader is before acquainted with; but shews the necessity likewise of taking many of the historical circumstances from the antient poets. For tradition, the proper foundation of Epic poetry, is now to be found only in their writings; and therefore must be used like a common stock, and not considered as the property of individuals.

FOR the immoderate length of the two Episodes, *viz.* those in the third and fifth books, all that I can say, is, that they are both brought in for very important purposes, and therefore may be permitted to take up more room than is ordinarily allowed to things of that sort. I intended the first of them as an experiment in that kind of fiction which distinguishes Homer's Odyssey, and the other as an attempt in heroic Tragedy, after the manner of Sophocles.

THE language is simple and artless. This I take to be a beauty, rather than a defect; for it gives an air of antiquity to the work, and makes the style more suitable to the subject

ject. The quaintness of Mr. Pope's expression, in his translation of the Iliad and Odyssey, is not at all suitable, either to the antiquity or majestic gravity of his author, and contributes more to make his fable appear vain and absurd, than any circumstance that seems of so little moment, could easily be supposed to do.

My learned readers will be surpris'd to find Agamemnon and Menelaus at the siege of Thebes, when, according to Homer, they were not there: and, at the same time, no notice taken of Sthenelus, the friend and companion of Diomed, whom the same author mentions as present in that expedition.

With respect to the first circumstance; I did not choose, for the sake of a fact of so little consequence, and that too depending only upon poetical authority, to deprive myself of two illustrious names very proper for adorning my catalogue of heroes. And as to the second; it will be easily allowed, that I could not have made Sthenelus appear, without assigning him that place in Diomed's friendship, and consequently in the action of the poem, which Ulysses now possesses; and which

is

is the only part in the whole ſuited to his peculiar character. I muſt have put a ſecond rate hero in the place of a firſt rate one; and a name little known, in the place of one which every body is acquainted with. Beſides, I muſt have transferred, to Sthenelus, the valor, firmneſs, and addreſs of Ulyſſes; becauſe the part he was to act would have required theſe, and muſt, at the ſame time, have ſunk Ulyſſes into the character of Sthenelus, for want of a proper opportunity of diſplaying him in his own. Theſe are inconveniencies too great to be incurred for the ſake of a ſcrupulous agreement with Homer in point of fact; and are therefore, in my opinion, prudently avoided.

I have explained myſelf upon the foregoing particulars, for the ſake of the learned part of my readers only: and ſhall now drop a hint for ſuch of them as do not fall under that denomination.

THE following poem is called the *Epigoniad*, becauſe the heroes, whoſe actions it celebrates, have got the name of *The Epigones* (or *deſcendants)* being the ſons of thoſe who attempted the conqueſt of Thebes in a former expedition.

THUS far I have attempted to apologize for the following performance. It may be questioned, no doubt, upon many accounts besides those that have been mentioned: but I persuade myself, that what has been said will determine every candid reader, not to be peremptory in condemning what at first view he may dislike; for the specimen of criticism which has been given, will convince him that the real faults of Epic poetry are not easily ascertained, and distinguished from those inconveniencies that must be allowed to take place, in order to prevent greater evils, and produce a higher degree of perfection upon the whole.

THE

EPIGONIAD.

BOOK I.

YE pow'rs of ſong! with whoſe immortal fire
Your bard inraptur'd ſung Pelides' ire,
To Greece ſo fatal, when in evil hour
He brav'd, in ſtern debate, the ſov'reign pow'r;
By like example, teach me now to ſhow
From love, no leſs, what dire diſaſters flow.
For when the youth of Greece, by Theſeus led,
Return'd to conquer where their fathers bled,
And puniſh guilty Thebes, by heav'n ordain'd
For perfidy to fall, and oaths profan'd;
Venus, ſtill partial to the Theban arms,
Tydeus's ſon ſeduc'd by female charms;
Who, from his plighted faith by paſſion ſway'd,
The chiefs, the army, and himſelf betray'd.

THIS theme did once your fav'rite bard employ,
Whoſe verſe immortaliz'd the fall of Troy:
But time's oblivious gulf, which ſtill conceals
What art or nature to the light reveals,
In whoſe wide vortex worlds themſelves are toſt,
And rounding ſwift ſucceſſively are loſt,
This ſong hath ſnatch'd. I now reſume the ſtrain,
Not from proud hope and emulation vain,
By this attempt to merit equal praiſe
With worth heroic, born in happier days.
Sooner the weed, that with the Spring appears,
And in the Summer's heat its bloſſom bears,
But, ſhriv'ling at the touch of Winter hoar,
Sinks to its native earth, and is no more;
Might match the lofty oak, which long hath ſtood,
From age to age, the monarch of the wood.
But love excites me, and deſire to trace
His glorious ſteps, tho' with unequal pace.
Before me ſtill I ſee his awful ſhade,
With garlands crown'd of leaves which never fade;
He points the path to fame, and bids me ſcale
Parnaſſus' ſlipp'ry height, where thouſands fail:

I follow trembling; for the cliffs are high,
And hov'ring round them watchful Harpies fly,
To ſnatch the poet's wreath with envious claws,
And hiſs contempt for merited applauſe.
But if great CAMPBELL, whoſe auſpicious ſmile
Bids genius yet revive to bleſs our iſle,
Who, from the toils of ſtate and public cares,
Oft with the muſes to the ſhade repairs,
My numbers ſhall approve, I riſe to fame;
For what he praiſes, envy dares not blame.

WHERE high Olympus' hundred heads ariſe,
Divide the clouds, and mingle with the ſkies,
The Gods aſſembled met; and view'd, from far,
Thebes and the various combats of the war.
From all apart the Paphian goddeſs ſat,
And pity'd in her heart her fav'rite ſtate,
Decreed to periſh, by the Argive bands,
Pallas's art, Tydides' mighty hands:
Penſive ſhe ſat, and ev'ry art explor'd
To charm the victor, and reſtrain his ſword;

But

But veil'd her purpoſe from the piercing ray
Of Pallas, ever jealous of her ſway:
Unſeen the Goddeſs, from th' Olympian height
To ſhady Cyprus bent her rapid flight,
Down the ſteep air, as, from the ſetting ſkies,
At ev'n's approach, a ſtreaming meteor flies;
Where lofty ſhores the tempeſt's rage reſtrain,
And ſleeps, in peace diſſolv'd, the hoary main:
In Love's fam'd iſle a deep receſs is found,
Which woods embrace, and precipices bound,
To Venus ſacred; there her temple ſtands,
Where azure billows waſh the golden ſands,
A hollow cave; and lifts its rocky head,
With native myrtle crown'd, a lofty ſhade;
Whither reſort the Naiads of the flood,
Aſſembl'd with the nymphs from ev'ry wood;
Her heifers there they tend, and fleecy ſtore,
Along the windings of the deſart ſhore.
Thither the Goddeſs, from th'Olympian height
Deſcending ſwift, precipitates her flight;
Conſpicuous, on the yellow ſand, ſhe ſtood,
Above the margin of the azure flood.

From

From ev'ry grove and ſtream the nymphs attend,
And to their Queen in chearful homage bend.
Some haſt'ning to the ſacred grott repair,
And deck its rocky walls with garlands fair;
Others produce the gifts which Autumn brings,
And ſparkling nectar quench'd with mountain
ſprings.
And now the Queen, impatient to explain
Her ſecret griefs, addreſs'd her liſt'ning train.

YE rural Goddeſſes, immortal fair!
Who all my joys and all my ſorrows ſhare;
I come, afflicted, from th' ethereal tow'rs,
Where Thebes is doom'd to fall by partial pow'rs,
Nor can intreaty ſave my fav'rite ſtate,
Avert or change the rigour of her fate;
Tho', breathing incenſe, there my altar ſtands,
With daily gifts ſupply'd from virgins hands.
Juno now rules the ſenate of the ſkies,
And with her dictates ev'ry pow'r complies;
Her jealous hate the guiltleſs town condemns
To waſteful havock, and the rage of flames;

Since,

Since, thither tempted by a ſtranger's charms,
The mighty Thunderer forſook her arms.
Jove's warlike daughter too promotes her aim,
Who, for Tydides, ſeeks immortal fame;
For him employs a mother's watchful cares,
And the firſt honours of the war prepares:
To fruſtrate both, a monument would raiſe
Of laſting triumph and immortal praiſe,
Allure the ſon of Tydeus from the field,
To whoſe victorious hands the town muſt yield;
For by the all-decreeing will of fate
He only can o'erthrow the Theban ſtate.
A way which promiſes ſucceſs I'll name:
The valiant youth adores a lovely dame,
Alcander's daughter, whom the Graces join'd
With gifts adorn, above the human kind:
She with her ſire forſook th' Heſperian ſtrand,
By hoſtile arms expell'd their native land:
For Echetus who rules, with tyrant force,
Where Aufidus directs his downward courſe,
And high Garganus, on th'Apulian plain,
Is mark'd by ſailors, from the diſtant main;

Oft

Oft from her ſire had claim'd the lovely maid,
Who, ſtill averſe, to grant his ſuit delay'd:
For, barb'rous in extreme, the tyrant feeds
With mangl'd limbs of men his hungry ſteeds:
Impatient of his love, by hoſtile arms
And force declar'd, he claim'd her matchleſs charms,
Pelignium raz'd, the hero's royal ſeat,
Who ſought in foreign climes a ſafe retreat:
His flight, Ætolia's friendly ſhore receives,
Her gen'rous lord protects him and relieves;
Three cities to poſſeſs, the chief obtains,
With hills for paſture fit, and fruitful plains.
Caſſandra for his bride, Tydides claim'd;
For hymeneal rites, the hour was nam'd,
When call'd to arms againſt the Theban tow'rs
The chief reluctant led his martial pow'rs.
Hence jealouſy and fear his breaſt divide,
Fear for the ſafety of an abſent bride;
Leſt, by his paſſion rous'd, the tyrant riſe
And unoppos'd uſurp the lovely prize.
He knows not, that, in martial arms conceal'd,
With him, ſhe braves the terrors of the field;

True

True to his ſide, noon's ſultry toil endures,
And the cold damps that chill the midnight hours.
If dreams, or ſigns, could jealouſy impart,
And whet the cares that ſting the hero's heart,
Impatient of his pain, he'd ſoon prepare,
With all his native bands, to quit the war.

THE Goddeſs thus: a Paphian nymph reply'd,
And drew the liſt'ning crowd on ev'ry ſide,
Zelotypé, whom fell Alecto bore,
With Cupid mixing on th' infernal ſhore.

GODDESS! theſe ſháfts ſhall compaſs what you aim,
My mother dipt their points in Stygian flame;
Where'er my father's darts their way have found,
Mine follow deep, and poiſon all the wound.
By theſe we ſoon, with triumph, ſhall behold
Pallas deceiv'd, and Juno's ſelf control'd.

THEY all approve; and, to the rural fane,
Around their ſov'reign, moves the joyful train;
The

The Goddeſs plac'd, in order each ſucceeds,
With ſong and dance the genial feaſt proceeds;
While to the ſprightly harp, the voice explains
The loves of all the gods in wanton ſtrains:
But when arriv'd the ſilent hour which brings
The ſhades of ev'ning on its dewy wings;
Zelotypé, impatient to purſue
Her journey, haſt'ning to her cave, withdrew;
Firſt to her feet the winged ſhoes ſhe binds,
Which tread the air, and mount the rapid winds;
Aloft they bear her thro' th' ethereal plain,
Above the ſolid earth and liquid main:
Her arrows next ſhe takes of pointed ſteel,
For ſight too ſmall, but terrible to feel;
Rous'd by their ſmart, the ſavage lion roars,
And mad to combat ruſh the tuſky boars,
Of wounds ſecure; for when their venom bites,
What feels their power all other torture ſlights.
A figur'd zone, myſteriouſly deſign'd,
Around her waiſt her yellow robe confin'd:
There dark Suſpicion lurk'd, of ſable hue;
There haſty Rage his deadly dagger drew;

Pale Envy inly pin'd; and by her ſide,
Outrageous Phrenzy with his chains unty'd;
Affronted Pride with thirſt of vengeance burn'd,
And Love's exceſs to deepeſt hatred turn'd.
All theſe the artiſt's curious hand expreſs'd,
The work divine his matchleſs ſkill confeſs'd.
The virgin laſt, around her ſhoulders flung
The bow; and by her ſide the quiver hung:
Then, ſpringing up, her airy courſe ſhe bends
For Thebes; and lightly o'er the tents deſcends.
The ſon of Tydeus, 'midſt his bands, ſhe found
In arms compleat, repoſing on the ground;
And, as he ſlept the hero thus addreſs'd,
Her form to fancy's waking eye expreſs'd.

THRICE happy youth! whoſe glory 'tis to ſhare
The Paphian goddeſs's peculiar care;
But happy only, as you now improve
The warning ſent as earneſt of her love.
Her meſſenger I am: if in your heart,
The fair Heſperian virgin claims a part.

If

If, with regret, you'd ſee her matchleſs charms
Deſtin'd to bleſs a happier rival's arms;
Your coaſts defenceleſs, and unguarded tow'rs
Conſum'd, and ravaged by hoſtile pow'rs;
Withdraw your warriors from the Argive hoſt,
And ſave whate'er you value, ere 'tis loſt.
For Echetus, who rules with tyrant force,
Where Aufidus directs his downward courſe;
And high Garganus on th' Apulian ſtrand,
Marks to the mariner the diſtant land,
Prepares, by ſwift invaſion, to remove
Your virgin bride, and diſappoint your love.
Before, excited by her matchleſs charms,
He claim'd her from her ſire by hoſtile arms;
Pelignium raz'd, the hero's royal ſeat,
When in your land he ſought a ſafe retreat.
Caſſandra follow'd with reluctant mind,
To love the tyrant, ſecretly inclin'd;
Tho' fierce and barb'rous in extreme he feeds,
With mangl'd limbs of men, his hungry ſteeds.
And now at anchor on the Latian tide,
With all their train on board, his galleys ride:

Prepar'd,

Prepar'd, when favor'd by the weſtern breeze,
With courſe direct to croſs the narrow ſeas.
This to your ear the Paphian goddeſs ſends;
The reſt upon your timely care depends.

She ſaid; and turning fix'd upon the bow
A venom'd ſhaft, the cauſe of future woe:
Then, with reverted aim, the ſubtile dart
Diſmiſs'd, and fix'd it in the hero's heart.
Amaz'd he wak'd; and, on his arm reclin'd,
Diſburden'd thus with groans his anxious mind.

What dire diſaſters all my ways beſet!
How cloſe around me pitch'd the fatal net!
Here if I ſtay, nor quit the Argive hoſt,
Etolia's ravag'd, and Caſſandra's loſt:
For ſure the pow'rs immortal ne'er in vain,
To mortals thus the ſecret fates explain.
If I retire, the princes muſt upbraid
My plighted faith infring'd, the hoſt betray'd;
And, to ſucceeding times, the voice of fame,
With cowardice and ſloth, will blot my name.

Between

Between these sad alternatives I find
No distant hopes to sooth my troubled mind;
Unless I could persuade the Argive pow'rs
To quit at once these long contested tow'rs:
Nor want I reasons specious in debate
To move the boldest warriors to retreat.
Divided thus, the shame would lighter fall;
Reproach is scarce reproach which touches all.

Thus pond'ring in his mind the hero lay,
Till darkness fled before the morning ray:
Then rose; and, grasping in his mighty hand
The regal staff, the sign of high command,
Pensive and sad forsook his lofty tent,
And sought the son of Dares as he went;
Talthybius he sought, nor sought in vain;
He found the hero 'midst his native train;
And charg'd him to convene, from tent to tent,
The kings to Eteon's lofty monument.

Obedient to the charge, he took his way,
Where Theseus 'midst the bold Athenians lay,

The

The king of men; in whoſe ſuperior hand,
Conſenting princes plac'd the chief command.
Adraſtus next he call'd, whoſe hoary hairs
By age were whiten'd and a length of cares;
Who firſt to Thebes the Argive warriors led:
In vain for Polynices' right they bled,
By fate decreed to fall; he now inſpires
The ſons to conquer, and avenge their ſires.
Ulyſſes heard, who led his martial train,
In twenty ſhips, acroſs the ſounding main:
The youth, in Ithaca, Zacynthus, bred,
And Cephalenia crown'd with lofty ſhade.
The Spartan monarch, with his brother, heard
The herald's call; and at the call appear'd:
Yet young in arms, tho' great in after fame,
When Greece to Troy beneath their conduct came.
The Cretan chief appear'd; and he whoſe ſway
Meſſenia and the Pylian realms obey.
Oileus next he call'd, whoſe martial pow'rs
From Beſſa move and Scarphe's lofty tow'rs.
Elpenor too, who from the Chalcian ſtrand
And fair Eretria led his martial band,

Appear'd

Appear'd; and all who merited renown
In ten years war before the Trojan town.
Achilles only, yet unfit to wield
The Pelian jav'lin, and the pond'rous ſhield,
In Phthia ſtaid; to Chiron's care reſign'd,
Whoſe wiſe inſtructions form'd his mighty mind.
The chiefs were plac'd. Superior to the reſt
The monarch ſat, and thus the peers addreſt.

PRINCES! let Tydeus' valiant ſon declare
What cauſe convenes the ſenate of the war.
If of himſelf, or from advice he knows
Some ſecret miſchief plotted by our foes,
Which prudence may prevent and timely care;
We come his counſels and his works to ſhare.
The monarch thus. Tydides thus reply'd,
And drew attention deep on ev'ry ſide.

PRINCES! I have not now the hoſt conven'd,
For ſecrets by intelligence obtain'd;
But openly my judgment to expreſs
Of miſchiefs ſeen, which prudence muſt redreſs:

By

By war's devouring rage, our martial pow'rs
Grow thin and waſte before theſe hoſtile tow'rs;
While Thebes ſecure our vain attempts withſtands,
By daily aids ſuſtain'd from diſtant lands.
Shall we proceed to urge this dire debate,
And puſh, with hoſtile arms, the Theban ſtate?
Or, by experience taught the worſt to fear,
Conſult the public ſafety, and forbear?
Had our great ſires, by happier counſels ſway'd,
As prudence taught, neceſſity obey'd;
Renounc'd in time this fatal ſtrife, which brings
Alike to nations miſchief, and to kings;
Thoſe heroes had not, with their martial train,
Diſtinguiſh'd by their fall a foreign plain.
The gods themſelves, in vengeance for our crimes,
With ſuch diſaſters laſh the guilty times;
In judgment juſt they ſow'd the ſeeds of ſtrife,
To ſweep tranſgreſſors from the ſeats of life.
Let him, who obſtinately will, proceed,
And wait the vengeance hov'ring o'er his head;
Since Thebes grows ſtronger and the Argive pow'rs
Decreaſe, as famine or the ſword devours,

To

To-morrow I withdraw my martial train;
Nor ſtay to periſh, like my ſire, in vain.

Thus as the hero ſpoke, the kings divide,
And mingled murmurs round th' aſſembly glide,
Heard like the ſounds which warn the careful ſwain
Of ſudden winds or thick deſcending rain;
When mountain echoes catch the ſullen roar
Of billows burſting on the ſandy ſhore,
And hurl it round in airy circles toſt,
Till in the diſtant clouds the voice is loſt.
The king of men to ſudden rage reſign'd,
At once, the empire of his mighty mind,
With ſharp reproaches haſt'ning to reply;
But, more ſedate, the Pylian monarch nigh,
In act to riſe, the angry chief confin'd;
And, whiſp'ring, thus addreſs'd with head declin'd.
It ill becomes the prince, whoſe ſov'reign hand
Sways the dread ſcepter of ſupreme command,
To be the firſt in diſcord; and obey
As head-long paſſion blindly leads the way.

For when the kings in raſh debate engage,
'Tis yours to check and moderate their rage;
Since, of the various ills that can diſtreſs
Confed'rate councils and prevent ſucceſs,
Diſcord is chief; where'er the Fury ſways,
The parts ſhe ſevers, and the whole betrays.

THE hero thus. The king of men remain'd
By ſound advice perſuaded, and reſtrain'd.
Crete's valiant monarch roſe; and to the reſt,
Thus ſpoke the dictates of his gen'rous breaſt.

CONFED'RATE kings, when any leader here
The war diſſuades, and warns you to forbear,
I might approve; for, ſafe beyond the ſea,
Creon and Thebes can never injure me.
And when the barb'rous tyrant, unwithſtood,
His hot revenge ſhall quench in Grecian blood;
When Thrace and Macedon, by his command,
Shall ravage Argos and the Pylian ſtrand;
Secure and guarded by the ocean's ſtream,
Crete's hundred towns ſhall know it but by fame.

Yet would not I, tho' many ſuch were found,
For open war, adviſe a peace unſound.
Let Macedon to Thebes her ſuccours ſend,
And Thrace, with all her barb'rous tribes, deſcend;
By foreign aids the more our foes increaſe,
The greater glory waits us from ſucceſs.
You all remember, on the Iſthmean ſtrand
Where neighb'ring ſeas beſiege the ſtrait'ned land,
When Greece enleagu'd a full aſſembly held,
By public juſtice to the war compell'd;
That blood of ſlaughter'd victims drench'd the ground,
While oaths divine the willing nations bound,
Ne'er to return, till our victorious pow'rs
Had levell'd with the duſt the Theban tow'rs.
Jove heard, and bid applauding thunders roll,
Loud on the right; they ſhook the ſtarry pole:
For Jove himſelf is witneſs of our vows,
And him, who violates, his wrath purſues.
Our joyful ſhouts the earth, the ocean heard;
We catch'd the omen, and the God rever'd;

In confidence of full ſucceſs we came,
To conquer Thebes, and win immortal fame.
But if the gods and fate our fears diſtruſt,
To public juſtice and ourſelves unjuſt;
Diſhonour'd to our native ſeats we go,
And yield a laſting triumph to the foe.
Should now, from hence arriv'd, ſome warrior's ghoſt
Greet valiant Tydeus on the Stygian coaſt,
And tell, when danger or diſtreſs is near,
That Diomed perſuades the reſt to fear;
He'd ſhun the ſynod of the mighty dead,
And hide his anguiſh in ſome lonely ſhade;
Nature in all an equal courſe maintains;
The lion's whelp ſucceeds to awe the plains;
Pards gender pards; from tygers tygers ſpring;
No doves are hatch'd beneath a vultur's wing:
Each parent's image in his offspring lives;
But nought of Tydeus in his ſon ſurvives.

He ſaid; and by his ſharp reproaches ſtung,
And wav'ring in ſuſpenſe the hero hung,

In

In words now prone to vent his kindl'd ire,
Or fix'd in sullen silence to retire.
As when a current, from the ocean wide,
Rolls, thro' the Cyclades, its angry tide;
Now here, now there, in circling eddies tost,
The certain tenor of its course is lost,
Each wary pilot for his safety fears
In mute suspence, and trembles as he steers:
Such seem'd the tumult of the hero's breast,
And such amazement long restrain'd the rest.
Laertes' son at last the silence broke,
And, rising, thus with prudent purpose spoke.

PRINCES! I counsel war; but will not blame
The chief dissenting, whose illustrious name
We all must honor: yet, with patience, hear
What now I offer to the public ear.
I freely own th' unnumber'd ills that wait
On strife prolong'd, and war's disastrous state.
With war, lean Famine and diseases dwell,
And Discord fierce, escap'd the bounds of hell.

Where'er

Where'er on earth her courſe the Fury bends
A crowd of miſchiefs ſtill her ſteps attends;
Fear flies before her ſwifter than the wind,
And deſolation marks her path behind.
Yet her, attended thus, the Gods ordain
Stern arbitreſs of right to mortal men;
To awe injuſtice with her lifted ſpear,
And teach the tyrants of the earth to fear.
If Thebes is perjur'd, and exerts her might
For uſurpation in contempt of right;
If (oaths deſpis'd, and all the ties which bind
The great ſociety of human kind)
For Eteocles in the war ſhe ſtood,
And drench'd her thirſty fields with Grecian blood;
The Gods themſelves have err'd, and ſet in vain
The ſcepter'd kings injuſtice to reſtrain;
Elſe ſhe deſerves the laſt extremes to feel
Of waſteful fire and keen devouring ſteel.
Tho' prudence urg'd and equity approv'd,
Joining to ſecond what Tydides mov'd,
We could not hope the war for peace to change,
For Thebes of ſafety thinks not, but revenge.

Laſt

Laſt night, diſguis'd, I mingled with the foe,
Their ſecret hopes and purpoſes to know;
And found that Creon, with his martial train,
This day intends to brave us on the plain.
Greece too, I heard, by barb'rous ſov'reigns claim'd,
Some Athens, Argos, ſome Mycæne nam'd;
Sparta and Pylos, with the various towns
Which grace, in proſpect fair, th'Arcadian downs:
Others Etolia challeng'd for their lot;
Nor was ev'n Ithaca itſelf forgot.
From ſuch vain hopes to boaſting they proceed;
Each promiſes to win ſome hero's head.
Leophron too, diſtinguiſh'd from the reſt,
Superior pride and inſolence expreſs'd;
In form a God he 'midſt th'aſſembly ſtood,
By all ador'd, the idol of the crowd;
And promis'd, if he once in fight could meet
Th'Etolian chief, to ſtretch him at his feet;
Unleſs ſome god oppos'd, or daſtard fear,
By ſudden flight, ſhould ſnatch him from his ſpear.
Can we then hope by peace to end our toils,
When foes ſecure already ſhare our ſpoils?

Peace

Peace to expect from flight itſelf were vain;
And flight, I know, your gen'rous ſouls diſdain.

He ſaid. The chiefs with indignation burn'd;
And Diomed ſubmitting thus return'd.
Princes! I need not for myſelf profeſs,
What all have witneſſed, and muſt confeſs;
That in the front of battle ſtill engag'd,
I never ſhun'd to mingle where it rag'd.
Nor now does fear perſuade me to retire,
Falſe Creon ſafe, and guilty Thebes entire;
But war and famine thin our martial pow'rs,
While gods adverſe protect the Theban tow'rs.
And as the careful ſhepherd turns his flock
Back from the dangers of the ſlipp'ry rock,
And from the haunts where foxes mark the ground,
Or rapid rivers flow with banks unſound;
So kings ſhould warn the people to forbear
Attempts, when ſymptoms point deſtruction near.
But ſince the leaders, with conſenting voice,
For war already fix the public choice;
I freely yield, nor ever will divide,
Where all deliberate, and all decide.

I

THE hero thus, and ceas'd. And thus the reſt,
From his high ſeat, the king of men addreſs'd.
Since war is now decreed, 'tis next our care
That all ſhould ſpeedily for fight prepare.
Creon, this day, intends with all his train
To try our valor on the equal plain;
And will, with diligence, improve an hour,
Which finds us inattentive and ſecure.
Firſt let each leader with his bands in haſte
Snatch, as the time allows, a ſhort repaſt;
Then arm for fight, and to the field proceed,
The phalanx following as the chariots lead.
Who arms the firſt, and firſt to combat goes,
Tho' weaker, ſeems ſuperior to his foes;
But ſuch as lag are more than half o'erthrown,
Leſs in the eyes of others and their own.

THE monarch thus. The princes all aſſent.
Straight from the council thro' the hoſt they went,
To arm their bands with diligence and care;
They all obey, and all for fight prepare.

THE

EPIGONIAD.

BOOK II.

ASSEMBL'D on the plain, the Theban pow'rs
In order'd ranks appear before the tow'rs;
Creon their leader, whose usurped sway,
Despising right, the citizens obey.
The chiefs of Thebes, beneath his high command,
Rul'd the whole war and marshal'd ev'ry band.
His valiant son the first, his country's boast,
The hope of Thebes, the bulwark of her host,
Leophron, to the field the warriors led,
Whom Thebes herself within her ramparts bred:
Peneleus, who from Medeon led his pow'rs,
Œchalia low, and Arne's lofty tow'rs:
Leitus from Thespia, where the verdant shades
Of Helicon invite the tuneful maids:

Porthenor

Porthenor rich, whoſe wide poſſeſſions lay
Where fam'd Aſopus winds his wat'ry way;
Beneath Cytheron's height, the lofty mound
Which parts Bœotian plains from hoſtile ground:
Phericles, who the valiant warriors led
In Mycaleſſus, Harma, Aulis, bred:
Andremon, leader of his native band,
From lofty Schœnus on th' Iſmenian ſtrand:
And Anthedon where ſwift Euripus pent
Divides Eubœa from the continent:
Theſe rul'd the Theban pow'rs beneath the care
Of Creon, chief and ſov'reign of the war.

THE aids from Macedon the next were plac'd;
Their ſhining caſques with waving plumage grac'd;
A wolf's grey hide, around their ſhoulders flung,
With martial grace above their armour hung:
From high Dodona's ſacred ſhades they came;
Caſſander led them to the fields of fame.
The Thracians next, a formidable band;
Nations and tribes diſtinct, in order ſtand:

Byzantines

Byzantines fierce, whoſe crooked keels divide
The Pontic gulf, and ſtem the downward tide:
In Grecian arms the hardy warriors move,
With pond'rous ſhields and glitt'ring ſpears above.
The Thynians next were marſhal'd on the field;
Each with a faulcion arm'd and lunar ſhield,
Whoſe bending horns a verge of ſilver bound;
And figures fierce their brazen helmets crown'd:
With theſe the Daci came, a martial race;
Fierce as their clime, they rear the pond'rous mace;
In giant ſtrength ſecure, they ſcorn the ſpear,
And cruſh, with weighty blows, the ranks of war;
From Iſter's icy ſtreams, a barb'rous crowd,
In ſhaggy furs, a herd promiſcuous ſtood;
Swift as their ſavage game; for wide they roam
In tribes and nations, ignorant of home;
Excelling all who boaſt ſuperior ſkill
To ſend the winged arrow ſwift to kill:
Theſe Rhœſus rul'd, of various tribes compos'd,
By various leaders on the field diſpos'd.

To

To fight the Argives mov'd in close array;
Bright shone their arms and flash'd redoubl'd day;
Resolv'd, and still as silent night, they go;
Nor with insulting shouts provoke the foe.
Thick from their steps, in dusky volumes, rise
The parched fields, and darken all the skies.
Beneath the shade the ardent warriors close;
Their shields and helmets ring with sounding blows.

FIRST Menelaus struck a Theban lord;
His armed breast the weighty launce explor'd;
Burst the close mail; the shining breast-plate tore;
And, from life's fountain, drew a stream of gore.
Supine he fell amidst his native bands,
And wrench'd the fixed dart with dying hands.
To spoil the slain, the son of Atreus flies;
The Thebans interpose with hostile cries;
And Creon's valiant son his buckler spread,
An orb of triple brass, to guard the dead:
As JOVE's imperial bird her wings extends,
And from the shepherds rage her young defends;
So stern Leophron bore his ample shield;
Like Mars, he stood the terror of the field.

With dread unusual check'd, the Spartan band
Recoil'd; Atrides only dar'd to stand.
He thus began. Presumptuous youth! forbear
To tempt the fury of my flying spear.
That warrior there was by my jav'lin slain,
His spoils to guard you interpose in vain.
Atrides thus; and Creon's son replies:
Thy launce I dread not, and thy threats despise.
This hand hath many a chief of high renown,
And braver warriors oft in fight o'erthrown:
Like theirs thy fall shall dignify my spear,
And future boasters thence be taught to fear.
Thus as he spoke his weighty launce he threw
At Atreus' son; which rising as it flew
Upon the hero's crest with furious sway,
Glanc'd as it pass'd and shav'd the plumes away.
Hissing amidst the Spartan ranks it came,
And struck a youth of undistinguish'd name:
Cold, thro' his breast, the steel and polish'd wood
A passage forc'd, and drew a stream of blood.

His launce Atrides next prepares to throw;
Poises it long, and meditates the blow:

Then,

Then, from his hand diſmiſs'd with happier aim,
Thund'ring againſt the Theban ſhield it came;
Where wreath'd around a mimic ſerpent twin'd,
With plates of poliſh'd ſilver lightly join'd:
Thence turn'd with courſe oblique it drove along,
And ſpent its fury on the vulgar throng.
Leophron ſtraight his flaming faulcion drew,
And at his foe, with eager fury, flew:
As, ſtooping from above, an eagle ſprings
To ſnatch his prey, and ſhoots upon his wings.
The Spartan warrior dreads impending fate;
And, turning, meditates a quick retreat.
As when a ſhepherd ſwain, in deſart ſhades,
The blood-nurs'd offspring of the wolf invades;
If, to protect her young, appears the dame,
Her angry teeth diſplay'd and eyes of flame;
With darts at firſt, and threat'ning ſhouts he tries,
To awe the guardian, and aſſert the prize:
But, when ſhe ſprings, the cloſe encounter dreads,
And trembling, from the angry foe recedes.
So Menelaus fled. His native train,
In wild diſorder, ſcatters o'er the plain.

His valiant brother heard upon the right,
Where in his lofty car he rul'd the fight;
And to his ſquire Nicomachus: With ſpeed,
Turn to the left, and urge the flying ſteed.
For, if theſe ſounds deceive not, Sparta fails;
And, with a tide of conqueſt, Thebes prevails.
Quick as the word, the ſilver reins he drew,
And thro' the fight the bounding chariot flew.
Like ſome ſwift veſſel, when a proſp'rous gale
Favours her courſe, and ſtretches ev'ry ſail;
Above the parting waves ſhe lightly flies,
And ſmooth behind a tract of ocean lies:
So, 'midſt the combat, ruſh'd the lofty car;
Pierc'd the thick tumult, and disjoin'd the war.
But Clytodemon's ſon a jav'lin threw;
With force impel'd, it lighten'd as it flew,
And ſtruck the right-hand courſer to the ground,
Ethon for ſwiftneſs in the race renown'd.
Behind his ear the deadly weapon ſtood,
Loos'd his high neck, and drew a ſtream of blood.
Groaning he ſunk; and ſpread his flowing mane,
A ſhining circle, on the duſty plain.

Intangled deep the royal chariot ſtood,
With hoſtile ſpears beſet, an iron wood.

FROM his high ſeat the Spartan hero ſprung;
Amidſt the foe his clanging armour rung.
Before the king, the armed bands retire;
As ſhepherd ſwains avoid a lion's ire,
When fierce from famine on their darts he turns,
And rage indignant in his eye-balls burns.
'Midſt the black tumult, like the early ſtar
Of ev'ning, ſhone his ſilver arms afar;
Which, o'er the hills, its ſetting light diſplays;
And marks the ruddy weſt with ſilver rays.
Pale and amaz'd his brother chief he found,
An armed circle of his friends around.
Alas, my brother! have I liv'd to ſee
Thy life redeem'd with deathleſs infamy
(The hero cry'd); far better that a ghoſt
You now had wander'd on the Stygian coaſt,
And by a glorious fall preſerv'd your name
Safe and unblaſted by the breath of fame;
Which ſoon ſhall tell the world, amaz'd to hear,
That Menelaus taught the hoſt to fear.

By conscious guilt subdu'd the youth appear'd;
Without reply, the just reproach he heard:
Confounded, to the ground he turn'd his eyes;
Indignant thus the great Atrides cries:
Mycæneans! Spartans! taught to seek renown
From dangers greatly brav'd and battles won;
Ah warriors! will ye fly, when close behind
Dishonour follows swifter than the wind?
Return to glory: whether Jove ordains,
With wreaths of conquest, to reward your pains,
Or dooms your fall; he merits equal praise,
With him who conquers, he who bravely dies.
The hero thus; and, like swift light'ning driv'n
Thro' scatter'd clouds along the vault of heav'n
By Jove's dread arm, his martial voice inspir'd
The fainting host, and ev'ry bosom fir'd.
Again upon the conqu'ring foe they turn'd:
The war again, in all its fury, burn'd.
As when the deep, which ebbing from the land
Along the coast displays a waste of sand,
Returns; and, blown by angry tempests, roars
A stormy deluge 'gainst the rocky shores:

So,

So, rushing to the fight, the warriors came;
Ardent to conquer, and retrieve their fame.

BEFORE his host the son of Creon stood,
With labour'd dust obscure, and hostile blood;
And thus exclaim'd: Gods! shall this dastard train
(Warriors of Thebes!) dispute the field again?
Their better chief, I know him, leads the band;
But fate shall soon subdue him by my hand.
He said; and, at the king, his jav'lin threw;
Which, aim'd amiss, with erring fury flew.
Across the armed ranks it swiftly drove,
The warriors stooping as it rush'd above.
The Spartan hero aim'd his weighty spear;
And thus to JOVE address'd an ardent prayer:
Hear me, great Sire of gods! whose boundless sway
The fates of men and mortal things obey;
Whose sov'reign hand, with unresisted might,
Depresses or exalts the scales of fight:
Now grant success to my avenging hand,
And stretch this dire destroyer on the sand.

Jove, grant me now to reach his hated life,
And ſave my warriors in this doubtful ſtrife.
The hero thus; and ſent his weighty ſpear.
With ſpeed it flew, and pierc'd the yielding air;
Swift, as a faulcon to her quarry ſprings,
When down the wind ſhe ſtretches on her wings.
Leophron, ſtooping, ſhun'd the deadly ſtroke,
Which on the ſhield of Hegiſander broke.
Vain now his lute; in vain his melting ſtrains,
Soft as Apollo's on the Lycian plains:
His ſoul excluded, ſeeks the dark abodes
By Styx embrac'd, the terror of the gods;
Where ſurly Charon, with his lifted oar,
Drives the light ghoſts, and rules the dreary ſhore.

With grief Leophron ſaw the warrior ſlain.
He ſnatch'd a pond'rous mace from off the plain,
Cut in the Thracian woods, with ſnags around
Of pointed ſteel with iron circles bound.
Heav'd with gigantic force the club to throw,
He ſwung it thrice, and hurl'd it at his foe.

Thund'ring

Thund'ring upon his armed head it fell;
The brazen helmet rang with ſtunning knell.
As ſome huge rock by forceful engines thrown,
When hoſtile arms inveſt a frontier town,
Threat'ning deſtruction, rolls along the ſkies;
And war itſelf ſtands wond'ring as it flies:
If on ſome turret's top the tempeſt falls,
The tottering ſtructure tumbles from the walls
With hideous craſh; thus, ſtooping to the ground,
Atrides ſunk; his ſilver arms reſound.
But Pallas, mixing in the dire debate,
A life to reſcue yet not due to fate,
Had o'er his head her cloudy buckler held;
And half the fury of the blow repel'd.
The ſon of Creon ruſh'd to ſeize his prize,
The hero's ſpoils; and thus exulting cries:
Warriors of Thebes! your labours ſoon ſhall ceaſe,
And final victory reſtore your peace;
For great Atrides, by my valor ſlain,
A lifeleſs corpſe, lies ſtretch'd upon the plain.
Only be men! and make the Argive bands
Dread in ſucceeding times your mighty hands;

That foes no more, when mad ambition calls,
With dire alarms may ſhake your peaceful walls.
Exulting thus, the hero ruſh'd along;
And kindled, with his ſhouts, the vulgar throng.
Reſolv'd and firm the Spartan warriors ſtand
Around their king, a formidable band.
Their ſpears, protended thick, the foe reſtrain'd;
Their bucklers join'd, the weighty war ſuſtain'd.
But as a mountain wolf, from famine bold,
On prey intent, ſurveys the midnight fold;
Where, in the ſhelter of ſome arching rock,
At ev'n the careful ſhepherd pens his flock;
On ſpoil and ravage bent, he ſtalks around,
And meditates to ſpring the lofty mound:
Impatient thus the Theban chief ſurvey'd
The cloſe-compacted ranks on ev'ry ſide;
To find where leaſt the ſerried orb could bear
The ſtrong impreſſion of a pointed war.
Him Menelaus ſaw, with anguiſh ſtung;
And, from amidſt his armed warriors, ſprung

With

With wrath inflam'd; as ſtarting from a brake,
Againſt ſome trav'ler, darts a creſted ſnake.
His rage in vain the Theban ranks withſtand;
The braveſt warriors ſink beneath his hand.
Clytander, Iphitus, Palemon, fam'd
For chariots rul'd and fiery courſers tam'd;
And Perciphaus, like the God of light,
Whoſe pointed arrows thin'd the lines of fight:
Theſe the firſt tranſports of his fury feel.
Againſt Leophron now he lifts his ſteel,
And ſpeeds to vengeance; but, in full career,
He ſtood arreſted by a vulgar ſpear.
Fix'd in his thigh the barbed weapon hung,
Relax'd the muſcles, and the nerves unſtrung.
The Spartan warriors to his ſuccour flew;
Againſt the darts their ample ſhields they threw,
Which ſtorm'd around; and, from the rage of war,
Convey'd the wounded hero to his car.

WITH fierce impatience Creon's ſon beheld
The Spartan warriors ſtill diſpute the field.

Before

Before their leader fall'n the heroes ſtood;
Their ſpears erected, like the ſacred wood
Which round ſome altar riſes on the plain
The myſtic rites to hide from eyes profane.
Thither his native bands the hero turn'd;
Drawn to a wedge, again the combat burn'd.
Thro' all the air a ſtorm of jav'lins ſung;
With ſounding blows each hollow buckler rung.
Firſt Enopæus felt a deadly wound;
Who in Amycle till'd the fruitful ground;
To great Andremon's ſpear he yields his breath,
And ſtarts and quivers in the graſp of death.
Next Hegeſippus preſs'd th' inſanguin'd plain;
Leophron's jav'lin mix'd him with the ſlain.
On Malea's cliffs he fed his fleecy ſtore,
Along the windings of the craggy ſhore.
He vow'd to Phœbus, for a ſafe return,
An hundred victims on his hearth to burn.
In vain! the God, in juſtice, had decreed,
His gifts contemn'd, the offerer to bleed:
For violence augmented ſtill his ſtore;
And, unreliev'd, the ſtranger left his door.

Prone on the bloody ground the warrior fell;
His ſoul indignant ſought the ſhades of hell.

NEXT Arcas, Cleon, valiant Chromius, dy'd;
With Dares to the Spartan chiefs ally'd.
And Phœmius, whom the gods in early youth
Had form'd for virtue and the love of truth;
His gen'rous ſoul to noble deeds they turn'd,
And love to mankind in his boſom burn'd:
Cold thro' his throat the hiſſing weapon glides,
And on his neck the waving locks divides.
His fate the Graces mourn'd. The gods above,
Who ſit around the ſtarry throne of JOVE,
On high Olympus bending from the ſkies,
His fate beheld with ſorrow-ſtreaming eyes.
Pallas alone, unalter'd and ſerene,
With ſecret triumph ſaw the mournful ſcene;
Not hard of heart; for none of all the pow'rs,
In earth or ocean, or th' Olympian tow'rs,
Holds equal ſympathy with human grief,
Or with a freer hand beſtows relief;

But

But conscious that by fate's eternal will,
To virtue, all is good and nothing ill;
Which mocks distress, and in its awful hour
O'er death itself exerts immortal pow'r.

Now Thebes prevailing, Sparta's host retreats;
As falls some rampart where the ocean beats:
Unable to resist its stormy way,
Mounds heap'd on mounds, and bars of rock give way;
With inundation wide the deluge reigns,
Drowns the deep valleys, and o'erspreads the plains.
Thus o'er the field, by great Leophron led,
Their foes repuls'd, the Theban squadrons spread.
The hero, stooping where Atrides lay,
Rent from his head the golden casque away;
His mail unlock'd; and loos'd the golden chains,
The zone which by his side the sword sustains.
The monarch now amidst the vulgar dead,
For wheels to crush and armed hoofs to tread,
Defenceless lay. But stern Leophron's hate
Retriev'd him, thus expos'd, from certain fate.

In ſemblance dead, he purpos'd to convey
The body naked to ſome public way;
Where dogs obſcene, and all the rav'nous race,
With wounds unſightly, might his limbs diſgrace.
Straight he commands; and to a neighb'ring grove,
His warriors, charg'd, the Spartan chief remove.
On their broad ſhields they bore him from the plain,
To ſenſe a corpſe, and number'd with the ſlain.
His fixed eyes in hov'ring ſhades were drown'd;
His mighty limbs in death-like fetters bound.
The ſhouts tumultuous and the din of war,
His ear receiv'd like murmurs heard afar;
Or as ſome peaſant hears, ſecurely laid
Beneath a vaulted cliff or woodland ſhade,
When o'er his head unnumber'd inſects ſing
In airy rounds, the children of the ſpring.

Adrastus' valiant ſon, with grief, beheld
The Spartans to inglorious flight compel'd;
Their valiant chief reſign'd to hoſtile hands.
He thus aloud addreſs'd the ſcatt'ring bands:

What

What ſhame, ye warriors! if ye thus expoſe
Your leader to the injuries of foes!
Tho' all ſhould quit him, honor bids you bring
His reliques back, or periſh with your king,
Leophron ſure injuriouſly ordains,
With inſults, to deface his dear remains;
Spurn'd by the feet of men, expos'd and bare,
For dogs obſcene and rav'nous birds to ſhare.
Exclaiming thus, thro' all the field he flew;
And call'd the hoſt the conflict to renew,
They ſtop, they charge; again the combat burns:
They bleed, they conquer, and retreat by turns,
Hegialus excites the dire debate;
And, by example, leads the work of fate:
For now he ſees Atrides borne afar,
By hoſtile hands, beyond the lines of war.
With indignation new his boſom glows;
He ruſhes fearleſs 'midſt a hoſt of foes;
And now had merited a deathleſs name,
And with a deed immortal crown'd his fame,
Atrides ſav'd; but fate's ſupreme command
That honor deſtin'd for a mightier hand.

LEOPHRON vex'd, that twice constrain'd to yield,
The Spartan warriors re-assum'd the field,
His pow'rs address'd: For ever lost our fame,
Dishonor foul will blot the Theban name;
If dastard foes, twice routed and pursu'd,
Shall brave the victors, still with rage renew'd.
Your glory gain'd with vigor now maintain;
Nor let us conquer thus and bleed in vain.
He said, and 'gainst the Argive hero turn'd;
With martial wrath his ardent bosom burn'd;
Who fearless and undaunted, dar'd to wait;
Nor by ignoble flight declin'd his fate.
For, at the Theban chief, his launce he threw,
Which, aim'd amiss, with erring fury flew:
Beyond the hostile ranks the weapon drove;
The warriors stooping as it rush'd above.
Not so the Theban spear; with happier aim,
Full to the center of the shield, it came;
And, rising swiftly from the polish'd round,
His throat transfix'd; and bent him to the ground.
To spoil the slain the ardent victor flew:
The Spartan bands the bloody shock renew;

Fierce

Fierce to the charge with tenfold rage return,
And all at once with thirst of vengeance burn.
O'er all the field the raging tumult grows;
And ev'ry helmet rings with sounding blows:
But most around the Argive hero dead;
There toil the mightiest, there the bravest bleed.
As when outrageous winds the ocean sweep,
And from the bottom stir the hoary deep;
O'er all the wat'ry plain the tempest raves,
Mixing in conflict loud the angry waves:
But where some pointed cliff the surface hides,
Whose top unseen provokes the angry tides;
With tenfold fury there the billows fly,
And mount in smoak and thunder to the sky.

Adrastus, by inactive age restrain'd,
Behind the army on a mount remain'd;
Under an oak the ancient warrior sat,
And saw and list'ned to the dire debate.
Now, tam'd by age, his coursers stood unbound;
His useless arms lay scatter'd on the ground;

Two

Two aged heralds there the chief obey'd;
The ſquire attending by his maſter ſtay'd.
And thus the king: What ſounds invade mine ear?
My friends! what ſad diſaſter muſt we hear?
Some hero's fall; for with the ſhouts, I know
Loud lamentation mixt, and ſounds of woe.
So were we told, when mighty Tydeus fell,
And Polynices trod the path to hell;
So rag'd the combat o'er the heroes ſlain,
And ſuch the din and tumult of the plain.
He ſaid; and liſt'ning (what he greatly fear'd)
Hegialus's name at laſt he heard
Mix'd with the noiſe; and, ſick'ning at the ſound,
By grief ſubdu'd fell proſtrate on the ground.
But rage ſucceeding and deſpair, he roſe
Eager to ruſh amidſt the thickeſt foes.
His ſpear he graſp'd, impatient for the fight;
And pond'rous ſhield, unequal to the weight.
Him frantic thus his wiſe attendants held;
And to retire with prudent care compel'd.
Impatient of his ſtate, by quick returns,
With grief he melts; with indignation burns.

And thus at laſt: Stern ruler of the ſky!
Whoſe ſport is man, and human miſery;
What deed of mine has ſtir'd thy boundleſs rage,
And call'd for vengeance on my helpleſs age?
Have I, by ſacrilege, your treaſures drain'd;
Your altars ſlighted; or your rites profan'd?
Did I forget my holy vows to pay?
Or bid you witneſs, and my faith betray?
Has lawleſs rapine e'er increas'd my ſtore,
Or unreliev'd the ſtranger left my door?
If not; in juſtice, can your ſtern decree
With wrath purſue my guiltleſs race and me?
Two hoſts againſt the Theban walls I've led;
The firſt in vain, for Polynices bled
By partial fates; for JOVE decrees to guard
Injuſtice, and her foul attempts reward.
Here valiant Tydeus, Polynices fell,
In one ſad hour they trod the path to hell;
For them my daughters mourn, their ſorrows flow
Still freſh, and all their days are ſpent in woe.
Hegialus remain'd my hopes to raiſe;
The only comfort of my joyleſs days;

In whom I ſaw my vigorous youth return,
And all our native virtues brighter burn.
He's now no more; and to the nether ſkies,
By fate exil'd, a bloodleſs ſpectre flies.
For what, ye gods! has unrelenting fate
Curs'd my misfortunes with ſo long a date?
That thus I live to ſee our antient race
At once extinguiſh'd, and for ever ceaſe!
Gods! grant me now, the only boon I crave,
For all my ſorrows paſt, a peaceful grave:
Now let me periſh, that my fleeting ghoſt
May reach my ſon in Pluto's ſhady coaſt;
Where join'd for ever, kindred ſouls abide,
Which death no more ſhall ſever and divide.
He ſaid; and ſinking proſtrate on the ground,
His furrow'd cheeks with floods of ſorrow drown'd;
And furious in the rage of grief, o'erſpread
With duſt the reverend honors of his head.

THE

THE

EPIGONIAD

BOOK III.

THE Spartan bands, with thirſt of vengeance fir'd,
The fight maintain'd; nor from their toils reſpir'd.
Before the hero fall'n the warriors ſtand,
Firm as the chains of rock which guard the ſtrand;
Whoſe rooted ſtrength the angry ocean braves,
And bounds the fury of his burſting waves.
So Sparta ſtood; their ſerried bucklers bar
The Theban phalanx, and exclude the war,
While from the field, upon their ſhoulders laid,
His warriors ſad the Argive prince convey'd;
Leophron ſaw, with indignation fir'd,
And, with his ſhouts, the ling'ring war inſpir'd.

Again

Again the rigor of the ſhock returns;
The ſlaughter rages, and the combat burns:
Till, puſh'd and yielding to ſuperior ſway,
In ſlow retreat the Spartan ranks gave way.
As, in ſome channel pent, intangled wood
Reluctant ſtirs before the angry flood;
Which, on its loaded current, ſlowly heaves
The ſpoils of foreſts mix'd with harveſt ſheaves.

PALLAS obſerv'd, and from th'Olympian height,
Precipitated ſwift her downward flight.
Like Cleon's valiant ſon, the Goddeſs came;
The ſame her ſtature, and her arms the ſame.
Deſcending from his chariot to the ground,
The ſon of Tydeus, 'midſt his bands, ſhe found;
His ſteeds unrul'd: for, ſtretch'd before the wheel,
Lay the bold driver pierc'd with Theban ſteel.
On the high car her mighty hand ſhe laid;
And thus addreſs'd the valiant Diomed:
The Spartan warriors, Prince! renounce the fight,
O'ermatch'd by numbers and ſuperior might:

While

While fate adverſe their valiant chief reſtrains,
Who dead or wounded with the foe remains;
Hegialus lies lifeleſs on the earth,
Brother to her from whom you claim your birth:
The great Atrides, as he preſs'd to ſave,
Leophron's jav'lin mark'd him for the grave.
To vengeance haſte; and, ere it is too late,
With ſpeedy ſuccor ſtop impending fate:
For ſtern Leophron, like the rage of flame,
With ruin threatens all the Spartan name.

THE Goddeſs thus; Tydides thus replies:
How partial are the counſels of the ſkies!
Oft for the bad the gods with partial care
Honor and peace and happineſs prepare;
While others groan beneath their partial hate,
Exhauſting all the injuries of fate.
Adraſtus thus, with juſtice, may complain
His daughters widow'd, ſons in battle ſlain.
In the devoted line, myſelf I ſtand;
And here muſt periſh by ſome hoſtile hand:

Yet

Yet not, for this, I ſhun the works of war,
Nor ſculk inglorious when I ought to dare.
And now I'll meet yon terror of the plain;
To crown his conqueſts, or avenge the ſlain.
But wiſh ſome valiant youth, to rule my car
And puſh the horſes thro' the lanes of war,
Were preſent; for, extended in his gore,
The brave Speuſippus knows his charge no more.

Thus as the hero ſpoke, Caſſandra heard,
And preſent, to aſſume the reins, appear'd.
By love inſpir'd, ſhe ſought the fields of war;
Her hero's ſafety was her only care.
A poliſh'd caſque her lovely temples bound,
With flow'rs of gold and various plumage crown'd;
Confus'dly gay, the peacocks changeful train,
With gaudy colors mix'd of ev'ry grain;
The virgin white, the yellow's golden hue,
The regal purple, and the ſhining blue,
With female ſkill compos'd. The ſhield ſhe bore
With flow'rs of gold was mark'd and ſpangled ore:

Light

Light and of ſlend'reſt make, ſhe held a launce;
Like ſome mock warrior armed for the dance,
When ſpring's return and muſic's chearful ſtrain
The youth invites to frolic on the plain.

Illustrious chief, the armed virgin ſaid,
To rule your ſteeds, on me the taſk be laid;
Skill'd to direct their courſe with ſteddy rein,
To wake their fiery mettle, or reſtrain;
To ſtop, to turn, the various arts I know;
To puſh them on direct, or ſhun the foe.
With ready hand your voice I ſhall obey;
And urge their fury where you point the way.
The virgin thus; and thus Tydides ſaid:
Your zeal I honor, but reject your aid.
Fierce are my ſteeds; their fury to reſtrain
The ſtrongeſt hand requires and ſtiffeſt rein:
For oft, their mettle rous'd, they ruſh along;
Nor feel the biting curb, or ſounding thong.
Oft have I ſeen you brave the toils of fight,
With dauntleſs courage but unequal might.

Small

Small is your force; and, from your arm unstrung,
The harmless launce is impotently flung.
Yet not for this you shun the martial strife,
Patient of wounds and prodigal of life.
Where'er I combat; faithful to my side,
No danger awes you, and no toils divide.
Yet grudge not that your service I decline;
Homocleon's better hand shall guide the rein:
His manly voice my horses will obey,
And move submissive to his firmer sway.

Th' Etolian warrior thus; and, with a bound,
Rose to his lofty chariot from the ground.
The Goddess to the driver's seat proceeds;
Assumes the reins, and winds the willing steeds.
On their smooth sides the sounding lash she plies;
And thro' the fight the smoaking chariot flies.
Th' Athenians soon they pass'd, and Phocians strong,
Who from fair Crissa led their martial throng.
Th' Arcadians next from Alpheus' silver flood,
And hardy Eleans grim with dust and blood,

With

With ſpeed they paſs'd. As when ſome pilot ſpies
The rocky cliffs in long ſucceſſion riſe,
When near the land his galley ſcours the ſhores,
By proſp'rous winds impel'd and ſpeeding oars:
So, croſs the field of war, the hero flew.
And now the Spartan hoſt appears in view:
By wounds ſubdu'd, their braveſt warriors lay;
Others, by ſhameful flight, their fear obey;
The reſt, in ſlow retreat, forſake the field,
O'ermatch'd by numbers and conſtrain'd to yield.
Th' Etolian hero ſaw, and rais'd his voice,
Loud as the ſilver trumpet's martial noiſe;
And ruſh'd to fight: Thro' all the field it flew;
The hoſt at once the happy ſignal knew;
And joy'd, as they who, from the found'ring ſhip
Eſcap'd, had ſtruggled long amidſt the deep:
Faint from deſpair, when hope and vigor fail,
If, haſt'ning to their aid, appears a ſail;
With force renew'd their weary limbs they ſtrain,
And climb the ſlipp'ry ridges of the main.
So joy'd the Spartans to repulſe the foe;
With hope reſtor'd, their gen'rous boſoms glow:

While Thebes, ſuſpended 'midſt her conqueſt, ſtands;
And feels a ſudden check thro' all her bands.

Leophron only, far before the reſt,
Tydides waited with a dauntleſs breaſt.
Firm and unaw'd the hardy warrior ſtood;
Like ſome fierce boar amidſt his native wood,
When armed ſwains his gloomy haunts invade,
And trace his footſteps thro' the lonely ſhade;
Reſolv'd he hears approach the hoſtile ſound,
Grinds his white teeth, and threat'ning glares around;
So ſtood Leophron truſting in his might,
And ſhook his armor, eager for the fight.
Tydides ſaw; and, ſpringing from his car,
Thus brav'd the hero, as he ruſh'd to war:
O ſon unhappy, of a ſire accurſt!
The plague of all, and fated to the worſt!
The injuries of Greece demand thy breath;
See, in my hand, the inſtrument of death.
Hegialus's ghoſt ſhall leſs deplore
His fate untimely on the Stygian ſhore,

When,

When, from the light exil'd, your ſhade ſhall come
To mingle with the dark infernal gloom.
Tydides thus; and Creon's ſon replies:
Your fear in vain, by boaſting, you diſguiſe;
Such vulgar art a novice oft confounds,
To ſcenes of battle new and martial ſounds;
Tho' loſt on me, who dwell amidſt alarms,
And never met a greater yet in arms.

THUS as the warrior ſpoke, his launce with care
He aim'd, and ſent it hiſſing thro' the air.
On Diomed's broad ſhield the weapon fell;
Loud rung the echoing braſs with ſtunning knell:
But the ſtrong orb, by Vulcan's labor bound,
Repel'd, and ſent it blunted to the ground.
Tydides next his pond'rous jav'lin threw:
With force impel'd, it brighten'd as it flew;
And pierc'd the border of the Theban ſhield,
Where, wreath'd around, a ſerpent guards the field;
Thro' the cloſe mail an eaſy paſſage found,
And mark'd his thigh, in paſſing, with a wound.

Now

Now in close fight the angry chiefs engage;
Like two fell griffins rous'd to equal rage;
Pois'd on their rolling trains they fiercely rise,
With blood-bespotted crests and burning eyes;
With poison fraught they aim their deadly stings,
Clasp their sharp fangs, and mix their rattling wings.
In combat thus, the ardent warriors clos'd,
With shield to shield, and foot to foot oppos'd.
First at his foe Leophron aim'd a stroke;
But, on his polish'd casque, the faulcion broke:
From the smooth steel the shiver'd weapon sprung;
Aloft in air its hissing splinters sung.
Not so, Tydides, did thy weapon fail;
With force impel'd it pierc'd the silver mail,
Whose sliding plates the warrior's neck surround;
A tide of gore came rushing from the wound.
Stagg'ring to earth he sunk with head declin'd;
And life in long convulsive throbs resign'd.
Nor stop'd Tydides to despoil the slain;
The warrior Goddess led him, cross the plain,
Towards the grove where great Atrides lay;
Th' immortal spear she stretch'd, and mark'd the way.

THITHER

THITHER amidſt ſurrounding foes they haſte;
Who ſhun'd them, ſtill retreating, as they paſs'd:
And ent'ring found the Spartan hero laid
On the green ſward, beneath the bow'ring ſhade.
The guard ſecure, lay ſtretch'd upon the ground;
Their ſhields reſign'd, their launces pitch'd around:
One only near a winding riv'let ſtood,
Which turn'd its wand'ring current thro' the wood;
His helmet fill'd with both his hands he rear'd,
In act to drink; when in the grove appear'd
Th' Etolian prince. His armour's fiery blaze
The dark receſs illumin'd with its rays.
Amaz'd the Theban ſtood; and, from his hand,
The helmet ſlip'd, and roll'd upon the ſand.
Not more afraid the wond'ring ſwain deſcries,
'Midſt night's thick gloom, a flaming meteor riſe;
Sent by the furies, as he deems, to ſow
Death and diſeaſes on the earth below.
Tydides comes! with fault'ring voice he cry'd,
And ſtraight to flight his willing limbs apply'd.
With ſudden fear ſurpris'd the guards retire;
As ſhepherd ſwains avoid a lion's ire,

Who

Who roams the heights and plains, from famine bold,
The ſtalls to ravage or aſſault the fold.

Now, lifeleſs as he lay, the martial maid
Atrides, with a pitying eye, ſurvey'd;
And with her ſpear revers'd, the hero ſhook:
The touch divine his iron ſlumber broke;
As when his drowſy mate the ſhepherd ſwain
Stirs with his crook, and calls him to the plain;
When in the eaſt he ſees the morning riſe,
And red'ning o'er his head the color'd ſkies.
As from the ground his head the hero rais'd,
In full divinity the Goddeſs blaz'd;
Her left, reveal'd, the dreadful Ægis rears,
Whoſe ample field the ſnaky Gorgon bears;
Th' immortal launce ſtood flaming in the right,
Which ſcatters and confounds the ranks of fight.
Speechleſs the chiefs remain'd; amazement ſtrong,
In mute ſuſpence and ſilence, held them long.
And thus the Goddeſs: Atreus' ſon! ariſe,
Confeſs the partial favour of the ſkies.

For thee I leave the thund'rer's lofty ſeat,
To wake thee ſlumb'ring on the verge of fate;
To you let Diomed his arms reſign;
Unequal were your force to govern mine:
His ſtronger arm ſhall bear this pond'rous ſhield;
His better hand the weighty jav'lin wield.
Ariſe! be ſudden, for your foes draw near;
Aſſur'd to conquer when the gods appear.

The Goddeſs thus; and, mixing with the wind,
Left in a heap her ſhining arms behind
Upon the field; with loud harmonious peal,
Th' immortal buckler rung and golden mail.
And thus Atrides, riſing from the ground:
In this, approv'd is hoar tradition found;
That oft, deſcending from th' ethereal tow'rs,
To mix with mortals, come the heav'nly pow'rs:
But ne'er till now I ſaw a god appear,
Or, more than human voice, did ever hear.
Do you, my friend, aſſume theſe arms divine;
The mortal and inferior ſhall be mine.

Atrides

Atrides thus; and Diomed reply'd:
To heav'n obedience must not be deny'd;
Else you yourself th' immortal arms should wield,
And I with these attend you on the field.
But of the pow'rs above, whose sov'reign sway
The fates of men and mortal things obey,
Pallas, with surest vengeance, still pursues
Such as obedience to her will refuse.

He said; and straight his shining arms unbound,
The casque, the mail, the buckler's weighty round;
With secret joy th' immortal helmet took:
High on its crest the waving plumage shook.
This whosoever wears, his sharp'ned eyes
All dangers mock of ambush and surprize:
Their ray unquench'd, the midnight shade divides;
No cunning covers, and no darkness hides.
The breast-plate next he takes, whose matchless art
Firm courage fixes in the bounding heart:
The rage of war unmov'd the wearer braves,
And rides serene amidst the stormy waves:

The glitt'ring mail a ſtarry baldric bound,
His arm ſuſtain'd the buckler's weighty round;
Impenetrably ſtrong, its orb can bear
And turn, like ſofteſt lead, the pointed ſpear;
Nor yields to aught, in earth or heav'n above,
But the dread thunder of almighty JOVE.
Th' immortal ſpear the hero laſt did wield,
Which fixes conqueſt and decides a field;
Nor ſtrength nor numbers can its rage withſtand,
Sent by a mortal or immortal hand.

THUS arm'd to meet the foe Tydides mov'd,
And glory'd conſcious of his might improv'd;
Like the proud ſteed rejoicing in his force,
When the ſhrill trumpet wakes him to the courſe:
Fierce and impatient of reſtraint, he ſtrains
With ſtiffned neck againſt the galling reins.
Taller he ſeem'd; as when the morning ſpread,
With golden luſtre, crowns ſome mountain's head
In early ſpring; when, from the meads below,
A wreath of vapors binds his rocky brow;

In cloudy volumes settling as they rise,
They lift the lofty prospect to the skies:
So in immortal arms the chief appear'd,
His stature broad display'd and higher rear'd.

Now from the field approaching to the grove,
Embattel'd thick, the Theban warriors move;
Slowly they move, as swains with doubtful steps
Approach the thicket where a lion sleeps.
Tydides saw; and, rushing from the shade,
The Spartan call'd and to the combat led.
Unaw'd the hero met the hostile band;
Nor could united force his rage withstand.
They wheel'd aloof; as when a dragon springs
From his dark den, and rears his pointed wings
Against approaching swains, when summer burns,
And the fresh lakes to parched desart turns;
They fly dispers'd, nor tempt his fatal ire,
His wrath-swoln neck and eyes of living fire:
So fled the Thebans, nor escap'd by flight.
Amidst their squadrons, like a falcon light,

The

The hero sprung; who, stooping from the skies,
The feather'd race disperses as he flies.
Still from his hand th' immortal weapon flew;
And ev'ry flight an armed warrior slew.
Andremon first, beneath his mighty hand,
Of life bereft, lay stretch'd upon the sand.
Pherecydes gigantic press'd the plain;
And valiant Tereus sunk amidst the slain.
Warriors to these of vulgar name succeed;
And all his path is mark'd with heaps of dead.
As when some woodman, by incessant strokes,
Bestrews a mountain with its falling oaks;
Fells the thick planes, the hawthorn's flow'ry shade,
The poplar fair by passing currents fed,
The laurel with unfading verdure crown'd;
Heaps roll'd on heaps, the forest sinks around;
So spreads the slaughter as the chief proceeds;
At ev'ry stroke an armed warrior bleeds.
Atrides combats by the hero's side,
To share his glory and the toil divide;
Unmov'd amidst the hostile ranks they go;
Before them far retreats the routed foe.

And

AND now the Spartan hoſt appear'd in ſight,
By toil ſubdu'd and ling'ring in the fight.
Their valiant leader ſaw, and rais'd his voice,
Loud as the ſilver trumpet's martial noiſe,
With hopes of victory his bands to chear;
It ſwiftly flew: the diſtant Spartans hear
With glad ſurprize. Polyctes thus addreſt,
And rous'd the languid valor of the reſt.
Myceneans! Spartans! taught to ſeek renown
From dangers greatly brav'd, and battles won;
With ſorrow and regret I ſee you yield,
And Thebes victorious drive you from the field.
Atrides calls us; to his aid repair:
No foe ſubdues you but your own deſpair.
He yet ſurvives, beſet with hoſtile bands,
And, from your valor, preſent aid demands.
He ſaid. The rigor of the ſhock returns;
The ſlaughter rages, and the combat burns.
As when a reaping train their ſickles wield,
Where yellow harveſt loads ſome fruitful field;
The maſter's heart, with ſecret joy, o'erflows;
He prompts the work, and counts the length'ning rows:

So

So 'midst the war, the Pow'r of battles stood,
Pleas'd with the carnage and the streams of blood.

Elpenor first lay lifeless on the plain,
By Ithobolus with a jav'lin slain,
A grief to Thebes. Euryalus the bold,
Rich in his flocks and rich in sums of gold,
Beneath the arm of Aristæus fell;
Loud rung his silver arms with echoing knell:
And like some flow'r, whose painted foliage fair
With fragrant breath perfumes the vernal air,
If the rude scythe its tender root invades,
It falls dishonor'd and its lustre fades.
Thus fell Euryalus; whose matchless grace,
In youth's full bloom, surpass'd the human race;
For Cynthius only could with him compare,
In comely features, shape, and flowing hair.

Now o'er the fields, the rage of war is spread;
And, heaps on heaps, ascend the hills of dead.
Ranks meeting ranks oppose with equal rage:
As when the north and stormy south engage,

Beneath

Beneath their strife the troubled ocean roars;
And rushing waves o'erwhelm the rocky shores;
So rag'd the fight; when, bursting from a crowd
Of thick opposing foes, the princes stood
Between the hosts. And thus th' Etolian lord:
Spartans! behold your valiant chief restor'd;
Ye owe his safety to Minerva's care;
Let hecatombs your gratitude declare,
Soon as from Thebes you reach your native ground,
Where flocks and herds for sacrifice abound;
Now fight and conquer; let this signal day
Your tedious toils, with victory, repay;
And, for Hegialus, let thousands dead
With ample vengeance gratify his shade.
As thus the hero spoke, the warriors heard,
And hope rekindled thro' the host appear'd;
With joyful shouts they rent the trembling air,
And bless'd the gods, and own'd Minerva's care.

Now, tow'ring in the midst, Atrides stood,
And call'd his warriors to the fight aloud:

As

As mariners with joy the ſun deſcry,
Aſcending, in his courſe, the eaſtern ſky;
Who all night long, by angry tempeſts toſt,
Shun'd with inceſſant toil ſome faithleſs coaſt;
So to his wiſhing friends Atrides came;
Their danger ſuch before, their joy the ſame.
Again the rigor of the ſhock returns;
The ſlaughter rages, and the combat burns;
With thirſt of vengeance ev'ry boſom glows.
Tydides leads, and ruſhes on his foes;
Around his head a ray of light'ning ſhone
From the ſmooth helmet and the glitt'ring cone;
Like that by night which ſtreams with fiery glare
When ſome red meteor glides along the air,
Sent by the angry gods, with tainted breath,
To ſow the ſeeds of peſtilence and death:
From look to look infectious terror ſpreads;
And ev'ry wretch th' impending vengeance dreads.

BEFORE the chief the Theban bands retire,
As ſhepherd ſwains avoid the lion's ire.

Clytander

Clytander only, by the fates impel'd,
Oppos'd him ſingle and diſdain'd to yield;
Lycaon's ſon; deceiv'd by glory's charms,
Superior might he brav'd and matchleſs arms.
Nor was his brother preſent by his ſide,
To ſhare the danger and the toil divide;
Himſelf a youth, and yet by time unſteel'd,
Single, he met Tydides in the field.
Againſt th' immortal ſhield his launce he flung,
Whoſe hollow orb, with deaf'ning clangor, rung:
The tow'rs of Thebes re-echo'd to the ſound;
The ſpear repuls'd fell blunted on the ground.
Tydides next th' immortal jav'lin threw;
With force impel'd, it bright'ned as it flew;
And pierc'd the Theban helmet near the cone;
Behind his ear the ſtarting weapon ſhone.
Supine the warrior fell, his ſpirit fled,
And mix'd with heroes in th' Elyſian ſhade.
To ſpoil the ſlain the ardent victor flew:
Firſt from the wound the fixed launce he drew,
The helmet loos'd, the coſtly mail unbound,
And ſhining ſhield with ſculptur'd figures crown'd.

Theſe

These spoils the hero, in his grateful mind,
A present for the gen'rous youth design'd;
Who still in perilous battle fought his side,
And proffer'd late his warlike steeds to guide.
Fatal the gift, the cause of future woe!
But good and ill th' immortals only know.
The armor to a vulgar hand consign'd,
Again the hero, swifter than the wind,
To combat rush'd.

But, from his throne above
Declin'd, the all-surveying eye of JOVE
His progress mark'd. The herald pow'r, who brings
His sov'reign mandates on immortal wings,
He thus address'd. To yonder sphere descend;
Bid Phoebus straight his ev'ning charge attend:
For, with reverted eye, he views the war,
And checks the progress of his downward car.
Let him not linger in th' ethereal way,
But lash his steeds, and straight conclude the day;
For, if the gods descend not to her aid,
Or ev'ning interpose with friendly shade,

Thebes now muſt periſh; and the doom of fate,
Anticipated, have an earlier date
Than fate ordains: for, like devouring flame,
Tydides threatens all the Theban name;
Immortal arms his native force improve,
Conferr'd by Pallas partial in her love.
Theſe to retrieve muſt be your next eſſay;
Win them by art, and hither ſtraight convey:
For man with man an equal war ſhall wage;
Nor with immortal weapons arm his rage.

He ſaid. And Maia's ſon, with ſpeed, addreſt
His flight to Phœbus hov'ring in the weſt.
Upon a cloud his winged feet he ſtay'd;
And thus the mandates of his ſire convey'd.
Ruler of light! let now thy car deſcend,
So Jove commands, and night her ſhade extend,
Elſe Thebes muſt periſh; and the doom of fate,
Anticipated, have an earlier date
Than fate decrees: for, like devouring flame,
Tydides threatens all the Theban name;

Immortal

Immortal arms his native force improve,
Conferr'd by Pallas partial in her love.

The son of Maia thus. The God obey'd;
The sounding lash upon his steeds he lay'd.
Swift to the goal with winged feet they flew;
And night ascended as the day withdrew.

To Thebes the herald next pursu'd his way;
Shot like a meteor with the setting ray.
Behind Tydides in the fight he stay'd;
And on his head the potent sceptre lay'd:
Whose magic pow'r on waking sense prevails;
Or, in profoundest sleep, the eye unseals;
The struggling ghost unbinds from mortal clay,
And drives it down the dark Tartarean way.
Subdu'd the hero stood by pow'rful charms,
Till Hermes stript him of th' immortal arms;
And, mounting to the starry roofs above,
Dispos'd them in the armory of Jove.
And, recollected, thus Tydides spoke:
Whate'er they give, th' immortals may revoke.

I own their favor; that, of mortal line
The firſt, I wore a panoply divine.
But if the day were length'ned to my will,
With light to point my jav'lin where to kill,
Thebes now ſhould periſh; but the morning ray
Shall finiſh what the ev'ning ſhades delay.

AND now the night began her ſilent reign;
Aſcending, from the deep, th' ethereal plain,
O'er both the hoſts ſhe ſtretch'd her ample ſhade,
Their conflict to ſuſpend: the hoſts obey'd.
The field no more a noiſy ſcene appears,
With ſteeds and chariots throng'd and glitt'ring ſpears;
But ſtill, and ſilent: like the hoary deep,
When, in their caves, the angry tempeſts ſleep,
Peaceful and ſmooth it ſpreads from ſhore to ſhore,
Where ſtorms had rag'd and billows ſwell'd before;
Such ſeem'd the field; the martial clangors ceaſe;
And war tumultuous lulls itſelf to peace.

THE

THE

EPIGONIAD.

BOOK IV.

AND now the princes of the Theban ſtate
In council ſat, aſſembled in the gate,
Where rows of marble pillars bound the ſpace,
To judgment ſacred in the days of peace.
And Creon thus, with public cares oppreſs'd
And private griefs, the ſenators addreſs'd.

PRINCES of Thebes, and valiant aids from far,
Our firm aſſociates in the works of war,
Heroes, attend! I ſhall not now propoſe
To ſupplicate, for peace, our haughty foes;
No peace can grow, no friendſhip e'er be found,
When mutual hate has torn ſo wide an wound.

Yet

Yet for a truce of ſeven days ſpace I plead,
And fun'ral obſequies to grace the dead.
Nor were it juſt, that they, who greatly fall
From rage of foes to guard their native wall,
Should want the honors which their merits claim,
Sepulchral rites deny'd and fun'ral flame.

Thus as he ſpoke, parental grief ſuppreſt
His voice, and ſwell'd within his lab'ring breaſt.
Silent amidſt th'aſſembled peers he ſtands,
And wipes his falling tears with trembling hands;
For great Leophron, once his country's boaſt,
The glory and the bulwark of her hoſt,
Pierc'd by a foe and lifeleſs on the plain,
Lay drench'd in gore and mix'd with vulgar ſlain:
Silent he ſtood; the Theban lords around
His grief partake, in ſtreams of ſorrow drown'd;
Till ſage Palantes roſe, and to the reſt,
The Monarch ſeconding, his words addreſt.

Princes! renown'd for wiſdom and for might,
Rever'd in council and approv'd in fight;

What

What Creon moves the laws themſelves require,
With obſequies to grace and fun'ral fire
Each warrior, who in battle bravely falls
From rage of foes to guard his native walls.
If all approve, and none will ſure withſtand
What Creon counſels and the laws command,
Charg'd with the truce, Apollo's prieſt ſhall go
To offer and conclude it with the foe.
His ſilver hairs a mild reſpect may claim,
And great Apollo's ever honor'd name.

THE reſt aſſent. The venerable man,
Slow from his ſeat ariſing, thus began:
Princes of Thebes! and thou, whoſe ſov'reign hand
Sways the dread ſceptre of ſupreme command;
Tho' well I might this perilous charge refuſe,
And plead my feeble age a juſt excuſe;
Yet nothing ſhall reſtrain me, for I go,
Pleas'd with the pious charge, to meet the foe.
Willing I go; our bleeding warriors claim
Sepulchral honors and the fun'ral flame.

If all approve, let Clytophon attend;
With juſt ſucceſs our labors thus ſhall end:
For ſure no Theban boaſts an equal ſkill,
With pleaſing words, to bend the fixed will.

Sooth'd with the friendly praiſe, the hero ſaid,
No ſelf-regard ſhall hold me or diſſuade;
The pious charge my inmoſt thoughts approve.
He ſaid; and ſlow thro' yielding crowds they move;
While Thebes on ev'ry ſide aſſembled ſtands,
And ſupplicates the gods with lifted hands:
O grant that wrathful enemies may ſpare
Theſe rev'rend heads; nor wrong the ſilver hair!

And now they paſs'd the lofty gates, and came
Where ſlow Iſmenus winds his gentle ſtream;
Amphion's grove they paſs'd, whoſe umbrage wide
His rural tomb defends on ev'ry ſide.
The ſcene of fight they reach'd, and ſpacious fields
With mingled ſlaughter heap'd, and ſpears and ſhields.
Under their feet the hollow bucklers ſound;
And ſplinter'd faulcions glitter on the ground.

And

And now the ſtations of the camp appear,
Far as a ſhaft can wound the flying deer.
Thither, amidſt the wrecks of war, they go
With ſilent ſteps; and ſcape the watchful foe.
Now full in view before the guards they ſtand;
The prieſt diſplays his enſigns in his hand,
The laurel wreath, the gold beſpangled rod
With ſtars adorn'd, the ſymbols of the god.

He thus began: Ye Argive warriors, hear!
A peaceful meſſage to your tents we bear;
A truce is aſk'd, till the revolving ſun,
Seven times from eaſt to weſt his journey run,
Again aſcends; and, from the ocean's ſtreams,
Crowns the green mountains with his golden beams:
That mutually ſecure, with pious care,
Both hoſts funereal honors may prepare
For ev'ry hero, whom the rage of fight
Has ſwept to darkneſs and the ſhores of night.

Thus as he ſpoke, the liſt'ning warriors heard
With approbation, and the prieſt rever'd.

The chief of Salamis, their leader, went
Himſelf to guide them to the royal tent;
Which ſhone conſpicuous; thro' the ſhades of night
Its ſpacious portal pour'd a ſtream of light.
Thither conducted by the chief, they found
The king of men with all his peers around.
On thrones with purple ſpread each royal gueſt
In order ſat, and ſhar'd the genial feaſt.
Silent they enter'd. From his chair of ſtate,
Full in the midſt oppoſed to the gate,
The monarch ſaw; and riſing thus expreſt
The gen'rous dictates of his royal breaſt.

My gueſts, approach! no enemy is near;
This roof protects you, ſtraight forget your fear.
Ev'n tho' from yon devoted walls you come,
For vengeance mark'd by fate's eternal doom;
Here in my tent, with ſafety, you ſhall reſt,
And, with the princes, ſhare the genial feaſt.
You freely then your meſſage may propoſe,
When round the board the chearing vintage flows,
Which ſooths impatience, and the op'ned ear,
With favor and attention, bends to hear.

THE hero thus. Apollo's prieſt replies:
Humane thy manners, and thy words are wiſe;
With thee their nobleſt gifts the gods have plac'd,
And pow'r ſupreme with equal wiſdom grac'd:
Tho' oft, by parts, for others they ordain,
The arts of ſway, the privilege to reign;
In thee their partial favor has combin'd
The higheſt fortune with the greateſt mind.

As thus the ſage reply'd, the princely band
By turns preſented each his friendly hand,
The ſign of peace. For each a ſplendid throne,
Where fring'd with gold the purple cov'ring ſhone,
The ready waiters, by command, prepar'd;
There ſat the envoys and the banquet ſhar'd.
On ev'ry ſide the ſparkling vintage flows,
The momentary cure of human woes.
The rage of thirſt and hunger thus ſuppreſs'd,
To Neſtor turning Clytophon addreſs'd.

ILLUSTRIOUS chief! an honor now I'll claim,
Which not to publiſh, ſure, would merit blame.

Your

Your father's gueſt I was; by fortune led,
When from Trinacria's deſart ſhores I fled
With ills beſet: but, in his friendly land,
His gen'rous heart I prov'd and lib'ral hand.
A grateful mind excites me to reveal
His ſov'reign bounty, and attempt a tale
Of dear remembrance. But the fond deſign,
Prudence diſſenting, warns me to decline;
For when to public cares your thoughts you bend,
A private ſtory mingled muſt offend.

The artful Theban thus. The chief reply'd,
Whoſe ſov'reign mandates all the hoſt obey'd:
My honor'd gueſt! proceed; nor aught conceal
Which gratitude enjoins you to reveal:
For gen'rous deeds, imprudently ſuppreſt,
Lie unapplauded in the grateful breaſt:
And now the feaſt, ſhort interval of care,
To vocal ſymphony unbends the ear;
Or ſweet diſcourſe, which to the ſoul conveys
Sublimer joys than muſic's tuneful lays.

The

The monarch thus. The prudent ſage ſuppreſs'd
His inward joy, and thus the peers addreſs'd:
Each chief he ſtrove to gain, but Neſtor moſt,
Whoſe wiſdom ſway'd the councils of the hoſt.

CONFED'RATE kings! and thou whoſe ſov'reign hand
Sways the dread ſceptre of ſupreme command,
Attend and hearken! ſince you ſeek to know
The ſad beginnings of a life of woe.
In Rhodes my father once dominion claim'd,
Orſilochus, for deeds of valor, fam'd,
The Sporades his ſov'reign ſceptre own'd,
And high Carpathus with its foreſts crown'd.
His youngeſt hope I was, and ſcarce had ſeen
The tenth returning ſummer clothe the green,
When pirates ſnatch'd me from my native land,
When with my infant equals on the ſtrand
I play'd, of harm ſecure, and from the deep
With pleaſure ſaw approach the fatal ſhip;
Pleas'd with the whiteneſs of the ſails we ſtood,
And the red ſtreamers ſhining on the flood;

And

And fearless saw the hostile galley land,
Where from the hills a current seeks the strand.
They climb'd the rocky beach, and far around,
Intent on spoil and rapine, view'd the ground;
If any herd were near or fleecy store,
Or lonely mansion on the winding shore.
My young companions straight their fear obey,
I bold and unsuspecting, dar'd to stay.
Me straight they seiz'd; and doom'd to servile toil
A wretched captive in a foreign soil.
Struggling in vain, they bore me down the bay,
Where, anchor'd near the beach, their vessel lay;
And plac'd me on the deck with bitter cries:
To speeding gales I saw the canvass rise;
The boundless ocean far before me spread;
And from my reach the shores at distance fled.
All day I wept; but when the setting light
Retir'd, and yielded to the shades of night,
Sleep stole upon my grief with soft surprize,
Which care ne'er banish'd long from infant eyes.

Nine days we sail'd; the tenth returning ray
Show'd us Trinacria rising in our way,

Far

Far in the weſt; where, with his ev'ning beams,
The ſun deſcending gilds the ocean's ſtreams.
Thither the ſailors ply, and blindly run
On hidden dangers which they ought to ſhun;
For whom the gods diſtinguiſh by their hate,
They firſt confound and then reſign to fate.
All day we ſail'd; and with the ev'ning hour,
Which calls the ſhepherd to his rural bow'r,
Approach'd the ſhore. The foreſts on the land
We mark'd, and rivers op'ning from the ſtrand.
Then gladneſs touch'd my heart; the firſt I knew
Since fate had mix'd me with that lawleſs crew:
With joy I ſaw the riſing ſhores appear;
And hop'd to find ſome kind deliv'rer near;
Some gen'rous lord, to whom I might relate,
Low bending at his knees, my wretched fate.
Vain was the hope; the Cyclopes never know
Compaſſion, nor to melt at human woe.

Near on the left, and where the parted tides
A promontory's rocky height divides,

A bay they found; and on the fatal ſtrand
Deſcending, fix'd their veſſel to the land.
The valleys ſtraight and mountains they explore,
And the long windings of the deſart ſhore;
And find, of ſheep and goats, a mingled flock,
Under the ſhelter of a cavern'd rock.
The largeſt and the beſt the pirate band
Seiz'd; and prepar'd a banquet on the ſtrand.
With joy they feaſted; while the goblet, crown'd
With Mithymnean vintage, flow'd around.
Of harm ſecure they ſat; and void of fear
To mirth reſign'd; nor knew deſtruction near.

AMIDST them there I meditating ſat;
Some god inſpir'd me or the pow'r of fate,
To ſcape their hated hands: and ſoon I found
The wiſh'd occaſion; when along the ground,
Each where he ſat, the ruffians lay ſupine,
With ſleep oppreſs'd and ſenſe-ſubduing wine;
Softly I roſe, and to a lofty grove,
Which ſhaded all the mountain tops above,

Aſcending,

Aſcending, in a rocky cavern lay,
Till darkneſs fled before the morning ray.
Then from above I ſaw the pirate band,
In parties, roaming o'er the deſart ſtrand;
The mountain goats they drove and fleecy ſtore,
From all the paſtures, crowded to the ſhore.
Me too by name they call'd; and oft, in vain,
Explor'd each grove and thicket on the plain;
While from above I ſaw, with careleſs eye,
Them ſearching round and liſt'ning for reply.
Some to the ſhip the bleating ſpoil convey'd;
While others to prepare a banquet ſtay'd,
And call'd their mates: to ſhare the full repaſt
With mirth they came, nor knew it was their laſt.

Then from the rocky ſummit where I lay,
A flock appear'd deſcending to the bay;
Which thro' a narrow valley ruſh'd along,
Oxen and ſheep, an undiſtinguiſh'd throng.
With theſe the ſloping hills were cover'd o'er,
And the long windings of the ſandy ſhore.

Behind a Cyclops came; and, by degrees,
Rose to my view, and tower'd above the trees.
His giant stature, like a lofty rock,
Appear'd: and in his hand a knotted oak
Of tallest growth; around his shoulder flung
His bag enormous, by a cable hung.
Panting I lay; as when a lurking deer,
From some close thicket, sees the hunter near.
By dread subdu'd, confounded and amaz'd,
My fixed eye-balls dark'ned as I gaz'd.
Soon from above my wretched mates he knew,
As on the level shore, in open view,
They sat secure, with flow'ry garlands crown'd;
The signs of spoil and ravage scatter'd round.
With indignation, for his wasted flock,
Inflam'd, he thus like distant thunder spoke.
Whoe'er these are, who from their native soil
To foreign climates thus, in quest of spoil,
Licentious roam; they soon shall feel my hand,
And rue that e'er they touch'd Trinacria's strand.
As mutt'ring thus, along the craggy road
He came, the mountain trembled as he trode.

The

The wretches ſaw with horror and affright;
Each limb enfeebled loſt the pow'r of flight.
Their cries in vain the monſter mov'd to ſpare;
His club he rear'd and ſwung it thrice in air,
Then hurl'd it croſs the bay: it ſwiftly drove
O'er the ſmooth deep, and raz'd the beach above.
Threat'ning it ruſh'd along; but, bending low,
Each, where he ſat, eſcap'd the weighty blow.
Beyond them far it pitch'd upon the land,
Tore the green ſward, and heav'd a mount of ſand.
Now ſtarting from the ground they ſtrove to fly,
Preſs'd by deſpair and ſtrong neceſſity;
The woody ſummits of the cliffs to gain,
With fault'ring haſte they fled acroſs the plain.
But the impending mountains barr'd their flight,
High and projecting from their airy height;
Back from the ſlipp'ry arch, in heaps, they fall;
And with imploring cries for mercy call,
In vain. The monſter with gigantic ſtrides,
At twenty ſteps, the ſpacious bay divides;
Around his knees the whit'ning billows roar,
And his rude voice like thunder ſhakes the ſhore.

THERE

THERE thirty youths he flew; againſt the ſtones
And ragged cliffs, he daſh'd their crackling bones.
Twenty his feet and heavy hands purſue,
As to the ocean in deſpair they flew;
Striving the ſummit of the beach to gain,
With headlong courſe to ruſh into the main:
For there they hop'd a milder fate to have,
And leſs abhor'd, beneath the whelming wave,
Theſe too he reach'd; and, with his weighty hand,
Their flight oppreſs'd, and mix'd them with the ſand.
Two yet ſurviv'd; who ſupplicating ſtrove,
With humble ſuit, his barb'rous ſoul to move.
With trembling knees the ſandy beach they preſs'd;
And, as he came, the monſter thus addreſs'd.

O thou! with whom no mortal can compare
For ſtrength reſiſtleſs, pity now and ſpare.
O let the blood, already ſhed, atone
For our provoking guilt, and treſpaſs done!
O ſpare and pity! ſure, the gods above,
Who ſit around the ſtarry throne of JOVE,

Are

Are won by pray'r; and he whoſe matchleſs might
The ſolid earth ſuſtains and ſtarry height,
Oft ſpares the guilty; for his ſoul approves
Compaſſion, and the works of mercy loves.
Let ſov'reign pity touch thy mighty breaſt;
And him revere, the greateſt and the beſt;
Who pardons oft, but meaſures grief and pain
To ſuch as hear the wretched plead in vain.

As thus to touch his iron heart they try'd,
The Cyclops ſmiling, ſcornful thus reply'd:
The praiſe of mercy well your words proclaim;
And vengeance mark, tho' merited, with blame.
Well have you ſpoken; therefore, from my hand,
More favor hope than any of your band:
They, on the deſart ſhore expos'd and bare,
The wolves ſhall feaſt and ev'ry bird of air;
But ye, prefer'd above the reſt, ſhall have
This body for your monument and grave.

He ſaid, and ſeizing lifts them both on high,
With hands and feet extended in the ſky:

Then

Then daſh'd them thrice againſt the rocky ſhore;
Gnaw'd their warm fleſh, and drank their ſtreaming
gore.
Oft have I ſeen the havoc of the plain,
The rage of tempeſts and the ſtormy main;
But fate, in ſuch a form, ne'er met my eyes,
And, while I ſpeak, afreſh its horrors riſe
To chill my veins: nor can the vary'd ſtate
Of ſprightly youth, and middle age ſedate,
Or life's laſt ſtage with all its griefs oppreſt,
Baniſh the dire impreſſion from my breaſt.
For ſtill I ſee the monſter, as he ſtood,
His hairy viſage dy'd in human bood:
As the grim lion leaves the waſted plains,
Red from the ravage of the flocks and ſwains.

With vengeance pleas'd he view'd the ſhores
around;
And, riding near the beach, our veſſel found:
Her by the maſt he ſeiz'd; and to the land,
With all her anchors, dragg'd along the ſtrand.

Exploring,

Exploring, next the solid deck he tore,
And found, conceal'd below, his fleecy store.
With scornful smiles he saw the theft bewray'd;
And, sidelong on the beach, the galley laid;
And call'd his flock: to open light they strain,
Throng the wide rent, and crowd upon the plain:
Still, as they pass'd, his weighty hands he laid
On their soft backs, and, stroaking gently, said:
Go now, my flock! enjoy the verdant hills,
The rivers cool, the sweet refreshing rills,
The meads and shady forests, safe from harm;
Your foes lie crush'd beneath your master's arm.
The giant thus; and next the hold explor'd:
Four jars he found with Lesbian vintage stor'd.
These first he drain'd; then to his lips apply'd
His flute, which like a quiver by his side,
Of size enormous, hung. Its hollow sound
The woods repeated and the caves around.
Its music such, as when a stormy gale
Roars thro' a hollow cliff with hideous peal,
Resounding deep, along the level shore:
He play'd, and drove his past'ring flock before.

HORROR

Horror and grief at once my heart aſſail'd;
Preſages ſad o'er ev'ry hope prevail'd.
My diſtant country ruſh'd upon my mind;
My friends, my weeping parents, left behind.
Now loſt to hope, and furious from deſpair,
With both my hands I rent my rooted hair;
And, in an agony of ſorrow, preſt
With ſtrokes repeated oft, my heaving breaſt.
All day I mourn'd; but when the ſetting ray
Retir'd, and ev'ning ſhades expel'd the day;
Encourag'd by the night, I ſought the plain;
And, wand'ring anxious 'midſt the mangled ſlain,
Oft call'd, to know if any of the band
Did yet ſurvive, eſcap'd the monſter's hand:
But none reply'd. Along the deſart ſhore
All night I wander'd, 'midſt the ſullen roar
Of burſting billows; till the morning ray
Appear'd to light my ſolitary way.
'Twas then I reach'd a mountain's height o'erſpread
With thickets cloſe, and dark impending ſhade,
Hung o'er a valley, where a river leads
His wand'ring current thro' a grove of reeds.

Thither

THITHER I went; and, op'ning to the deep,
A cavern found beneath the rocky ſteep;
The haunt of mountain goats, when wint'ry rains
Have chac'd them from the hills and naked plains,
Gladly I enter'd; for, deceiv'd by fear,
I always thought the barb'rous Cyclops near;
His form deſcry'd in ev'ry tree behind,
And heard his voice approaching in the wind.
Of honey there a ſweet repaſt I found,
In cluſters hanging from the cliffs around.
My hunger ſoon appeas'd, the gentle pow'r
Of ſleep ſubdu'd me till the ev'ning hour.
'Twas then I wak'd; and to the deep below,
Thro' thickets, creep'd with careful ſteps and ſlow;
And gaz'd around if any hut were there,
Or ſolitary wretch my grief to ſhare:
But none appear'd. I climb'd a mountain's head,
Where, wide before me, lay the ocean ſpread;
And there no object met my wiſhing eyes,
But billows bounded by the ſetting ſkies.
Yet ſtill I gaz'd, till night's prevailing ſway
Extinguiſh'd, in the weſt, the ev'ning ray.

Hopeleſs and ſad, deſcending from my ſtand,
I wand'red on the ſolitary ſtrand,
Thro' the thick gloom; and heard the ſullen roar
Of billows burſting on the deſart ſhore.

Thus ten long years I liv'd, conceal'd by day,
Under a rock on wither'd leaves I lay;
At dawn and twilight on the mountains ſtood,
Exploring with my eyes the pathleſs flood;
Impatient till ſome friendly ſail ſhould come,
To waft me to my ſire and native home:
But none appear'd. The pilots ſhun the ſhores
Where Ætna flames, and dire Charybdis roars;
And where the curs'd Cyclopean brothers reign,
The lonely tyrants of the deſart plain.
Preſs'd by deſpair, at laſt I dar'd to brave,
Even in a ſkiff, the terrors of the wave;
Contemning all the perils in my way,
For worſe it ſeem'd than death itſelf to ſtay.

Of oziers ſoft the bending hull I wove;
And ply'd the ſkins of mountain goats above.
A ſlender fir, ten cubit lengths, I found
Fall'n from a mould'ring bank, and ſtript it round.

This for the maſt, with bulruſh ropes, I ty'd;
A pole to ſteer the rudder's uſe ſupply'd:
Four goat-ſkins join'd I fitted for the ſail,
And ſpread it with a pole to catch the gale.
Each chink with gum, againſt the brine, I clos'd:
And the whole work beneath a ſhade diſpos'd,
Where, from the hills deſcending to the main,
A winding current cuts the ſandy plain.
Nuts and dry'd figs in baſkets next I ſhar'd;
And liquid ſtores in bags of ſkin prepar'd:
And waited anxious till the ſouthern gale,
From the dire coaſt, ſhould bear my flying ſail.
Nine days I ſtay'd; and ſtill the northern breeze,
From great Heſperia, ſwept the whit'ning ſeas:
But on the tenth it chang'd; and, when the hour
Of twilight call'd the giant to his bow'r,
Down from my grotto to the ſhore I came,
And call'd the God who rules the ocean's ſtream;
Oblations vow'd, if, by his mighty hand
Conducted ſafe, I found my native land.
And, turning where conceal'd my veſſel lay,
The halſer loos'd and puſh'd her to the bay;

The

The ſail unfurl'd, and, ſteering from the ſtrand,
Behind me left with joy the hated land.

ALL night, by breezes ſped, the prow divides
The deep, and o'er the billows lightly glides.
But when the dawn, prevailing o'er the night,
Had ting'd the glowing eaſt with purple light;
The air was huſh'd: deſerted by the gale,
Looſe to the maſt deſcends the empty ſail.
And full againſt my courſe a current came;
Which hurl'd me backwards, floating on its ſtream,
Towards the land. I ſaw the ſhores draw near;
And the long billows on the beach appear.
The cruel Cyclops ſpy'd me, as he drove
His paſt'ring flock along the hills above;
And winding thro' the groves his ſecret way,
Conceal'd behind a promontory lay;
Prepar'd to ſnatch me, when his arm could reach
My ſkiff which drove ungovern'd to the beach.
I mark'd his purpoſe; furious from deſpair,
With both my hands I rent my rooted hair;
And on the poop with deſp'rate purpoſe ſtood,
Prepar'd to plunge into the whelming flood.

But

But Neptune sav'd me in that perilous hour;
The headlong current felt his present pow'r:
Back from the shore it turn'd, at his command,
And bore me joyful from the fatal strand.
The Cyclops vex'd; as when some fowler spies,
Safe from his cover'd snares, the quarry rise:
His seat forsook, and, leaning o'er the steep,
Strove with soft words to lure me from the deep.
Stranger, approach! nor fly this friendly strand;
Share the free blessings of a happy land:
Here, from each cliff, a stream of honey flows;
And ev'ry hill with purple vintage glows.
Approach; your fear forget; my bounty share;
My kindness prove and hospitable care.
As to allure me thus the monster try'd,
His fraud I knew; and rashly thus reply'd:
Talk not of friendship; well I know the doom
Of such as to your dire dominions come.
These eyes beheld when, with a ruthless hand,
My wretched mates you murder'd on the strand.
Two pled for pity, but their limbs you tore
With brutal rage, and drank their streaming gore.

If heav'n's dread Sov'reign, to my vengeful hand
His wasting flames would yield, and forked brand;
Scorch'd on the cliffs, your giant limbs should feed
The mountain wolves, and all the rav'nous breed.

I said; and from the south a rising breeze
Brush'd the thick woods, and swept the curling seas.
Above the waves my vessel lightly flew;
The ocean wid'ned, and the shores withdrew.
Inrag'd the Cyclops, rushing down the steep,
Eager to snatch me, plung'd into the deep:
My flight he follow'd with gigantic strides,
And stem'd with both his knees the rushing tides.
Soon had I perish'd, but escap'd again,
Protected by the God who rules the main.
He sent a spectre from his wat'ry caves;
Like mist it rose and hover'd o'er the waves.
A skiff like mine, by art divine, it grew;
And to the left across the ocean flew.
With course divided, where the pilot spies
Amidst the deep two desart islands rise,

In

In ſhape like altars, ſo by ſailors nam'd,
A mark for pilots, elſe for nothing fam'd;
The angry giant doubting ſtood, nor knew
Which to forſake, the ſhadow or the true:
For both ſeem'd equal. By the fates miſled,
He chac'd the airy image as it fled;
Nor reach'd it: for it led him thro' the main,
As the bright rainbow mocks ſome ſimple ſwain;
Who ſtill intent to catch it where it ſtands,
And graſp the ſhining meteor with his hands,
Along the dewy meadows holds his way;
But ſtill before him flies the coloured ray.
The Cyclops ſo, along the wat'ry plain,
The ſhadowy phantom chac'd and chac'd in vain:
The billows burſted on his hairy ſides,
And far behind him ruſh'd the parted tides.
Diſſolv'd at laſt, its airy ſtructure broke,
And vaniſh'd hov'ring like a cloud of ſmoke.
His error then, and my eſcape, he knew;
For, favour'd by the breeze, my veſſel flew
Far to the deep: yet plunging in the waves,
Torn from its bed a pond'rous rock he heaves,

Craggy

Craggy and black, with dangling ſea-weed hung,
Puſh'd from his hand the weighty maſs he flung,
To cruſh my flight; along th'ethereal plain
It roll'd, and thund'ring downwards ſhook the main.
Behind it fell; and farther from the ſhore,
Hurl'd on the mounting waves, my veſſel bore
Towards the deep. The giant ſaw, with pain,
His fraud detected, force eſſay'd in vain.
He curs'd the partial pow'rs, and laſh'd on high,
With both his hands, the ocean to the ſky.
Now ſafe beyond his reach a proſp'rous gale,
With breath uninterrupted, fill'd my ſail.
The ſhores retir'd; but, from the diſtant main,
I ſaw him tow'ring on the wat'ry plain,
Like a tall ſhip, and moving to the ſhore,
Sullen and ſad, to tend his fleecy ſtore.
Seven days I ſail'd; the eighth returning light
The Pylian ſhores preſented to my ſight
Far in the eaſt; and where the ſun diſplays,
Along the glitt'ring waves his early rays.
Thither I ſteer'd, and, where a point divides
Extended in the deep, the parted tides,

A fane I mark'd; whofe tow'ring fummit, rear'd
High in the air, with gilded fpires appear'd.
To Neptune facred on the beach it ftands,
Confpicuous from the fea and diftant lands.
Affembled on the fhore the people ftood
On ev'ry fide extended, like a wood:
And in the midft I faw a pillar rife,
Of facred fmoke, afcending to the fkies.
'Twas there I reach'd the hofpitable ftrand,
And joyful, fix'd my veffel to the land.

There, with his peers, your royal fire I found;
And fell before him proftrate on the ground,
Imploring aid; my lineage I reveal'd,
Nor aught of all my tedious toils conceal'd.
Attentive, as I fpoke, the hero heard,
Nor credulous nor diffident appear'd;
For prudence taught him, neither to receive
With eafy faith, nor rafhly difbelieve.

O fon of Neleus! tho' you juftly claim,
For eloquence and fkill, fuperior fame;
Yet to an equal glory ne'er afpire:
Vain were the hope to emulate your fire.

Eight days we feasted: Still the flowing bowl
Return'd, and sweet discourse, to glad the soul,
With pleasure heard; as comes the sound of rain,
In summer's drought, to cheat the careful swain:
And when the ninth returning morn arose,
Sixty bold mariners the hero chose,
Skill'd, thro' the deep, the flying keel to guide,
And sweep, with equal oars, the hoary tide:
They trimm'd a vessel, by their lord's command,
To waft me to my sire and native land.
With gifts enrich'd of robes and precious ore,
He sent me joyful from the Pylian shore.
Such Neleus was! and such his matchless praise
For hospitable deeds in former days;
The friend, the patron, destin'd to redress
The wrongs of fate, and comfort my distress.

But what is man! a reptile of the earth;
To toils successive fated from his birth;
Few are our joys; in long succession flow
Our griefs; we number all our days in woe.

Misfortune

Misfortune enter'd with my infant years;
My feeble age a load of sorrow bears.
Driv'n from my country by domestic foes,
Thebes but receiv'd me to partake her woes.
The sword I've seen and wide devouring fire,
Against her twice in fatal league conspire.
The public griefs, which ev'ry heart must share,
By nature taught to feel another's care,
Augment my own: our matrons weeping stand;
Our rev'rend elders mourn a ruin'd land;
Their furrow'd cheeks with streams of sorrow flow;
And wailing orphans swell the gen'ral woe;
They mourn their dearest hopes, in battle slain,
Whose limbs unbury'd load their native plain;
And now by us entreat that war may cease,
And, for seven days successive, yield to peace:
That mutually secure, with pious care,
Both hosts funereal honors may prepare.
For ev'ry warrior, whom the rage of fight
Has swept to darkness and the coasts of night.
To ratify the truce, if ye approve,
We come alike commission'd, as to move.

THUS

THUS Clytophon; and he, whose sov'reign sway
The warriors of the Pylian race obey,
Nestor, his partial favor thus express'd;
And to the Theban chief himself address'd.
The truth you speak, nor do your words appear
Prepar'd with art, or dictated by fear;
For what you tell, in part I can recal,
When young I saw you in my father's hall;
Yourself a youth; tho' now a length of years,
Imprinted deep, in all your form appears;
Yet still, with sure remembrance, can I trace
Your voice the same and lineaments of face.
An infant then upon your knees I hung,
And catch'd the pleasing wonders from your tongue.
Your woes I pity'd, as I pity still;
And, were the rest determin'd by my will,
The truce should stand: for piety conspires
With justice, to demand what Thebes requires.

THE hero thus; the king of men replies;
Princes, in fight approv'd, in council wise!

What

What Thebes propounds is yours alone to chuse,
If it seems best and fittest, or refuse:
For tho' your votes consenting in my hand
Have plac'd the scepter of supreme command;
Yet still my power, obedient to your choice,
Shall with its sanction join the public voice.

The monarch thus; and thus the chief reply'd,
Whom fair Ætolia's martial sons obey'd:
Princes, attend! and thou, whose sov'reign hand
Sways the dread scepter of supreme command!
What Thebes requires I do not now oppose,
Because, insensible to human woes,
The widow's tears I scorn, the mother's sighs,
The groans of fathers, or the orphans' cries,
Whose dearest hopes, in rage of battle slain,
Drench'd in their gore, lie scatter'd on the plain:
Compassion for the host, which fruitless toil
So long has wasted in a foreign soil,
What Thebes propounds, impels me to dissuade,
And, for the living, disregard the dead.

How

How long has war and famine thin'd our pow'rs,
Inactive camp'd around the Theban tow'rs?
And pestilence, whose dire infection flies,
Blown by the furies thro' the tainted skies?
Many now wander on the Stygian shore,
Whom sires and consorts shall behold no more;
And many still, who yet enjoy the day,
Must follow down the dark Tartarean way,
If, blinded by the fates, our counsels bar
The course of conquest and protract the war.
If equity and public right demands
That Thebes should fall by our avenging hands;
Now let us combat, till the gods above,
Who sit around the starry throne of JOVE,
The judges of the nations, crown our toil,
So long endur'd, with victory and spoil;
Or, destine us to fall in glorious fight
Elate and dauntless in the cause of right.
Shall we delay till dire infection spreads
Her raven wings o'er our devoted heads?
Till gen'rous wrath, by slow disease supprest,
Expires inactive in the warrior's breast,

And

And life, the price of glory, paid in vain,
We die forgotten on a foreign plain.

Tydides thus; and he, whose sov'reign sway
The warriors of the Pylian race obey,
Nestor reply'd, for eloquence approv'd,
By Pallas and the tuneful sisters lov'd:
Confed'rate kings! and thou, whose sov'reign hand
Sways the dread sceptre of supreme command,
Attend! and judge the reasons which I plead
For fun'ral rites, the honors of the dead.
Well have you heard the various ills that wait
On strife prolong'd, and war's disastrous state:
And they, who choose to dwell amidst alarms
The rage of slaughter and the din of arms,
Know little of the joys, when combats cease,
That crown with milder bliss the hours of peace:
Tho' gladly would I see, in vengeance just,
The Theban tow'rs, compounded with the dust;
That from the war releas'd, we might again
Each share the pleasures of his native reign:

Yet

Yet let us not presumptuously withstand
What piety alike and right command,
The honors of the dead; nor tempt the gods,
To curse our labors, from their bright abodes.
Far in the heav'ns, above this mortal scene,
In boundless light, the Thund'rer sits serene;
He views the works of men; the good he knows,
And on their just attempts success bestows;
But blasts impiety, and mocks its aim,
With disappointment sure, and lasting shame.

ATTEND, ye princes! and I shall unfold
What sage Harmodious taught my sire of old.
The Locri summon'd all their martial pow'rs,
And fought around the Orchomenian tow'rs.
From oxen seiz'd, began the dire debate;
And wide and wasteful was the work of fate.
The Orchomenians oft a truce propos'd:
For fun'ral rites; the Locrian chiefs oppos'd.
Nine days expir'd, the bleeding warriors lay;
Their wounds hot steaming to the solar ray.
From STYX's sable shore their ghosts implor'd,
With suppliant cries, hell's dread avenging lord.

He

He heard, and from the gloomy deep below
Of Erebus profound, the houſe of woe,
A fury ſent, the fierceſt of the crew,
Whoſe iron ſcourges human crimes purſue:
Diſcord her name; among th' infernal gods
She dwells, exiled from the bleſt abodes;
Tho' oft on earth ſhe rears her baleful head,
To kindle ſtrife, and make the nations bleed.
The fury came; and, hov'ring o'er the plain,
Devoted with her eyes the Locrian train.
In form a raven, to a mountain's brow,
Which hung above the ſcene of war, ſhe flew;
And on the airy ſummit took her ſeat,
With potent charms, to kindle dire debate.
The howling dogs her preſence firſt declare;
The war-horſe trembling ſnorts aloft in air;
On man at laſt the dire infection fell,
The awful vengeance of the pow'rs of hell.
Confuſion ſtraight thro' all the camp is found;
The wand'ring centinel deſerts his ground,
Fatally gay and crown'd with ev'ry weed,
Which weeping matrons ſcatter o'er the dead;

Of dire portent: but when the silent reign
Of night possess'd the mountains and the plain;
Above the camp her torch the fury rear'd,
Red, in the air, its baleful flame appear'd,
Kindling debate: outrageous strife arose,
Loud as the ocean when a tempest blows,
O'er all the plain, and stun'd the ear of night
With shouts tumultuous and the din of fight.
Down from her airy stand the Goddess came,
Gliding meteorous, like a stream of flame,
To kindle fiercer strife, with stronger charms,
To swell the tumult and the rage of arms.
The combat burn'd; the Orchomenians heard
With horror, nor beyond their walls appear'd,
By awe divine restrain'd; but when the light
Return'd successive on the steps of night,
From ev'ry tow'r they saw the spacious plain
With havoc heap'd, and mountains of the slain.
The secret cause the augurs first declar'd;
The justice of the gods they own'd and fear'd.
No fun'ral rite the Orchomenian state
On them bestow'd, the vulgar or the great;

In

In one deep pit, whose mouth extended wide
Four hundred cubit lengths from side to side,
They whelm'd them all; their bucklers and their
spears,
The steeds, the chariots, and the charioteers,
One ruin mix'd; for so the will of JOVE
The priests declar'd; and heap'd a mount above:
Such was the fate, by heav'n and hell decreed,
For them who impiously despis'd the dead.
And let not us their fatal wrath provoke,
Nor merit by our guile an equal stroke;
But seal the truce, and piously bestow
What to the reliques of the dead we owe.

HE said; the peers their joint assent declare,
The dead to honor, and the gods revere.
The king of men commands a herald straight,
The priests to call and hasten ev'ry rite.
While thus the sov'reign mandate they obey'd,
Th' Etolian leader rose, and frowning said:
O blind to truth! and fated to sustain
A length of woes, and tedious toils in vain!

By

By magic ſounds deceiv'd, as to her den
Some vocal fortreſs lures the ſteps of men;
O eloquence! thou fatal charm! how few,
Guided by thee, their real good purſue!
By thee, our minds, with magic fetters bound,
In all deciſions, true and falſe confound.
Not the unnumber'd wrecks, which lie along
The Syrens' coaſt the trophies of their ſong,
Nor there where Circe from the neighb'ring deep,
With ſtrong inchantments, draws the paſſing ſhip,
Can match thy ſpoils: O let me ne'er obey,
And follow blindly, as you point the way!
Confed'rate kings! ſince nothing can oppoſe
The truce you purpoſe with our treach'rous foes,
Pregnant with miſchief; I alone am free,
Nor theſe my eyes the fatal rite ſhall ſee;
Leſt it be ſaid, when miſchief ſhall ſucceed,
Tydides ſaw it, and approv'd the deed.

SPEAKING, he graſp'd his ſpear and pond'rous ſhield;
And mov'd like Mars, when, 'midſt th' imbattel'd field,

Sublime

Sublime he ſtalks to kindle fierce alarms,
To ſwell the tumult and the rage of arms.
Such ſeem'd the chief: the princes with ſurprize
Turn'd on the king of men, at once, their eyes.

He thus began: Since now the public choice,
The truce approves, with one conſenting voice;
Tydides only, with ſuperior pride,
Tho' youngeſt, ſtill the prompteſt to decide,
Our gen'ral ſenſe condemns; his haughty ſoul
Muſt not the counſels of the hoſt control,
Brave tho' he is; the altars ready ſtand;
In order waits the conſecrated band;
Straight let us ſeal the truce with blood and wine,
And, to atteſt it, call the pow'rs divine.

The monarch thus; Tydides to his tent,
Thro' the ſtill hoſt, in ſullen ſorrow went.
Fix'd in his mind the fatal viſion ſtay'd,
Snatch'd by invading force his lovely maid;
The fraud of Cytharea; ſtill his heart
Inceſſant anguiſh felt, and laſting ſmart:

And

And, as a lion, when his ſide retains
A barbed ſhaft, the cauſe of bitter pains,
Growls in ſome lonely ſhade; his friends declin'd,
He breath'd in groans the anguiſh of his mind.

Now round the flaming hearth th' aſſembly ſtands,
And Theſeus thus invokes with lifted hands:
Hear me, ye pow'rs, that rule the realms of light!
And ye dread ſov'reigns of the ſhades of night!
If, till the eighth ſucceeding ſun diſplays,
Above the eaſtern hills, his early rays,
Any bold warrior of the Argive bands,
Againſt a Theban lifts his hoſtile hands
By us approv'd; let ev'ry curſe ſucceed
On me, and all, for perjury decreed.
And as by blood this awful oath we ſeal,
The blood of victims drawn by deathful ſteel;
So let their blood be ſhed, who ſcorning right,
Shall impiouſly dare its ties to ſlight.
Apollo's prieſt, for Thebes, reſum'd the vow,
The gods above, invoking, and below,

Their

Their vengeance to inflict, if force, or art,
The truce should violate on either part.

The rites concluded thus, the king commands
Two younger warriors of his native bands
A chariot to prepare; the driver's place
Sophronimus assum'd; with tardy pace,
Ascend the sage ambassadors; before
A lighted torch Asteropæus bore,
And led the way; the tents, the field of war,
They pass'd, and at the gate dismiss'd the car.

THE

EPIGONIAD.

BOOK V.

SOON as the ſun diſplay'd his orient ray,
And crown'd the mountain tops with early day;
Thro' ev'ry gate the Theban warriors flow,
Unarm'd and fearleſs of th' invading foe:
As when, in early ſpring, the ſhepherd ſees
Ruſh from ſome hollow rock a ſtream of bees,
Long in the cliffs, from winter's rage, conceal'd,
New to the light, and ſtrangers to the field;
In compaſs wide their mazy flight they ſteer,
Which wings of balmy zephyrs lightly bear.
Along the meads, where ſome ſoft river flows,
Or foreſts, where the flow'ry hawthorn blows;
To taſte the early ſpring their courſe they bend,
And lightly with the genial breeze deſcend:

So o'er the heights and plains the Thebans spread;
Some, 'midst the heaps of slaughter, sought their dead;
Others with axes to the woods repair'd,
Fell'd the thick forests, and the mountains bar'd.

Now from their tents the Argive warriors mov'd,
By Theseus led, whom virgin Pallas lov'd.
The harness'd wains ten thousand oxen drew,
Tam'd to the yoke, the servants of the plow;
Slow up the mountains move the heavy wheels,
The steep ascent each groaning axle feels:
In ev'ry grove the temper'd axes sound;
The thick trees crackle, and the caves resound.
Now to the plain the moving woods descend,
Under their weight a thousand axles bend;
And round the camp and round the Theban walls,
Heaps roll'd on heaps, the mingled forest falls.
On this the Spartan chief, his native bands,
With speed to rear a lofty pile, commands;
Which for Hegialus, with grateful mind,
Adrastus' valiant son, the chief design'd;

Who

Who to his aid, when ev'ry warrior fled,
Repair'd, and for his rescue greatly bled:
His gen'rous warriors thus the chief addrest,
While sighs incessant labor'd from his breast.

The chief of Argos, warriors! first demands
Funereal honors from our grateful hands;
For him this lofty structure is decreed,
And ev'ry rite in order shall succeed:
His dear remains in my pavilion rest;
Nor can Adrastus at the rites assist,
To rage, to phrenzy, and despair resign'd,
By griefs on griefs, subdued his manly mind:
The other princes of the army wait
The obsequies to grace, with mournful state.

He said; and to his tent the warriors led,
Where stood already deck'd the fun'ral bed,
With Syrian oil bedew'd; the corpse they found
Fresh from the bath, and breathing fragrance round:
For Menelaus, with divided care,
Each rite domestic hasten'd to prepare:

Twelve princes to the pile the corpse sustain'd;
The head on Agamemnon's hands remain'd:
With mournful pomp the slow procession mov'd;
For all the hero honor'd and approv'd.

First on the top the fun'ral bed they place;
And next, the sad solemnity to grace,
And gratify the manes of the slain,
The blood of steeds and bullocks drench'd the plain.
The four fair steeds which drew the rapid car,
That bore the hero thro' the ranks of war,
Their lofty necks the pointed faulchion tore,
With force impell'd, and drew a stream of gore:
Three groaning sink; but, fiercer from the stroke,
The silver reins the fourth with fury broke,
And fled around the field: his snowy chest,
Was dash'd with streaming blood; and lofty crest.
In circles still he wheel'd: at ev'ry round,
Still nearer to the pile himself he found;
Till drain'd of life, by blood alone supply'd,
Where first he felt the blow, he sunk, and dy'd.

By awe divine subdu'd, the warriors stand;
And silent wonder fixes ev'ry band:

Till

Till thus Atrides: Sure th' immortal gods,
The glorious synod of the blest abodes,
Approve our rites; the good their favor share,
In death and life the objects of their care.

Atrides thus: and, further to augment
The mournful pomp, the martial Goddess went
Thro' all the camp, in Merion's form express'd;
And thus aloud the public ear address'd:
Warriors and friends! on yonder lofty pyre,
Hegialus expects the fun'ral fire;
For such high merit, public tears should flow;
And Greece assembled pour a flood of woe.
Now let us all his obsequies attend;
And, with the mournful rites, our sorrows blend.
Proclaiming thus aloud the Goddess went;
The army heard; and each forsakes his tent;
Her voice had touch'd their hearts; they mov'd along,
Nations and tribes, an undistinguish'd throng.
Around the pile the wid'ning circle grows;
As, spreading in some vale, a deluge flows,

By mountain torrents fed, which stretch wide,
And float the level lands on ev'ry side.
Distinguish'd in the midst the princes stand,
With scepters grac'd, the ensigns of command.
Atrides with superior grief oppress'd,
Thus to the sire of gods his pray'r address'd.

DREAD sov'reign, hear! whose unresisted sway
The fates of men and mortal things obey:
From thee the virtue of the hero springs;
Thine is the glory and the pow'r of kings.
If e'er by thee, and virgin Pallas, led,
To noble deeds this gen'rous youth was bred;
If love to men, or piety, possess,
With highest purposes, his dauntless breast;
Command the winds in bolder gusts to rise,
And bear the flames, I kindle, to the skies.

THE hero thus; and, with the fun'ral brand,
The structure touch'd; and climbing from his hand,
Ascends the blaze: the ruler of the sky
Commands; at once the willing tempests fly:
Rushing in streams invisible, they came,
Drove the light smoke, and rais'd the sheeted flame.

The

The favor of the gods, the nations own;
And, with their joint applause, the hero crown.
From morn till noon the roaring flames aspire,
And fat of victims added feeds the fire:
Then fall their lofty spires, and, sinking low,
O'er the pale ashes tremulously glow.
With wine, the smoke, and burning embers lay'd;
The bones they glean'd, and to a tomb convey'd
Under an oak, which, near the public way,
Travellers invites to shun the noontide ray.

Now twenty warriors of Atrides' train,
Loaded with treasure, brought a harness'd wain;
Vases, and tripods in bright order plac'd,
And splendid arms with fair devices grac'd:
These for the games the Spartan chief decreed,
The fun'ral games in honor of the dead.
Amidst the princes first a polish'd yew,
Unbent upon the ground the hero threw;
Of work divine, which Cynthius lent before
And Chiron next upon the mountain bore.

He

His ſire the third receiv'd it: now it lies,
For him who fartheſt ſhoots, the deſtin'd prize.
HEROES, approach! Atrides thus aloud,
Stand forth, diſtinguiſh'd from the circling crowd,
Ye who, by ſkill or manly force, may claim
Your rivals to ſurpaſs and merit fame.
This bow, worth twenty oxen, is decreed
For him who fartheſt ſends the winged reed:
This bowl, worth eight, ſhall be reſerv'd to grace
The man whoſe merit holds the ſecond place.
He ſpoke: His words the bold Ajaces fir'd;
Crete's valiant monarch to the prize aſpir'd;
Teucer for ſhooting fam'd; and Merion ſtrong,
Whoſe force enormous drag'd a bull along;
Prompt to contend and rais'd with hope, they ſtood;
Laertes' ſon the laſt forſook the crowd.
Tydides too had join'd them, and obtain'd
Whatever could by ſkill or force be gain'd;
But in his tent, indulging ſad deſpair,
He ſat, ſubdu'd by heart-conſuming care.
Straight in a caſque the equal lots were thrown;
Idomeneüs drew and found his own;

Teucer, with hope inſpir'd, the ſecond claim'd;
The third Oileus, much for ſhooting fam'd:
Next claim'd the wearer of the ſeven-fold ſhield,
Tho' young in arms, diſtinguiſh'd in the field:
Ulyſſes! thine came next; and, laſt of all,
Bold Merion with a ſmile receiv'd his ball.

PRESS'D with incumbent force, the Cretan lord
Strain'd the ſtiff bow, and bent it to the cord;
Then, from the full ſtor'd quiver, choſe with art,
Wing'd for th' aerial flight, a pointed dart.
Theſeus commands the warriors to divide,
Who crowded thick and preſs'd on ev'ry ſide;
Straight they retire; as, at the word of JOVE,
From day's bright face the ſcatt'ring clouds remove;
And thro' the hoſt appear'd a ſpacious way,
Where woods and fields in diſtant proſpect lay.
With force immenſe, the Cretan monarch drew,
Stretch'd the tough cord, and ſtrain'd the circling yew;
From his firm gripe the ſtarting arrow ſprung,
The ſtiff bow crack'd, the twanging cordage ſung.

Up the light air the hissing weapon flies,
Pierces the winds, and streams along the skies:
Far to the distant plain it swiftly drove;
The host stood wond'ring as it rush'd above;
Descending there upon a mount it stood;
A depth of soil receiv'd the trembling wood.
Applause from all, tumultuous shouts declare,
By the rous'd echoes wafted thro' the air.
Such joy the hero feels, as praise inspires,
And to the circle of the kings retires.

THE valiant Teucer next receiv'd the bow;
And to Apollo thus address'd a vow:
Hear me, dread king! whose unresisted sway
Controls the sun, and rules the course of day;
Great patron of the bow! this shaft impell;
And hecatombs my gratitude shall tell;
Soon as to Salamis our martial pow'rs
Return, victorious, from the Theban tow'rs.
He said, and bid the winged arrow fly;
It pierc'd the winds, and swept a length of sky;

In

In compaſs, like the colored arch, which ſhines
Exalted, as the ſetting ſun declines;
From north to ſouth it marks th' ethereal ſpace,
And woods and mountains fill its wide embrace:
Beyond the Cretan ſhaft, it reach'd the plain;
As far before, as now a ſhepherd ſwain,
Hurl'd from a ſling, the ſounding flint can throw,
From his young charge, to drive the deadly crow.

Oilean Ajax next the weapon claim'd,
For ſkill above the reſt, and practice fam'd;
But Phœbus, chief and patron of the art,
Retarded in its flight the winged dart:
For, not by pray'rs, nor holy vows, he ſtrove,
Of grateful ſacrifice, the God to move.
Downwards he turn'd it, where a cedar fair
Had ſhot its ſpiring top aloft in air;
Catch'd in a bough the quiv'ring weapon ſtood,
Nor forc'd a paſſage thro' the cloſing wood.

Ajax the next appear'd upon the plain,
With ſtrength untaught, and emulous in vain;

With

With finewy arms the folid yew he bends;
Near and more near, approach the doubling ends:
The arrow fprung; but erring took its way,
Far to the left, where oozy marfhes lay
And groves of reeds; where flow Ifmenus ftrays,
And winds, thro' thickets green, his wat'ry maze.
Abafh'd the youth, with painful fteps, retires;
And now Ulyffes to the prize afpires.

In filence thus the prudent warrior pray'd,
And, in his heart, addrefs'd the martial maid:
Great queen of arts! on thee my hopes depend;
With favor, to thy fuppliant's fuit, attend!
By thee my infant arms were taught to throw
The dart with certain aim, and bend the bow!
Oft on my little hands, immortal maid!
To guide the fhaft, thy mighty hands were laid:
Now, Goddefs, aid me, while I ftrive for fame;
Wing the fwift weapon, and affert my claim.
He pray'd; and Pallas, at his fuit, defcends;
And prefent from th' Olympian courts attends.

With

With force divine his manly limbs she strung,
The bow he strain'd; the starting arrow sung;
As when the sire of gods, with wrathful hand,
Drives the swift light'ning and the forked brand,
To waste the labors of the careful swains,
Consume the mountain flocks, or scorch the plains;
With sudden glare appears the fiery ray;
No thought can trace it thro' th' ethereal way:
So swift thy winged shaft, Ulysses! flew,
Nor could the following eye its speed pursue.
The flight of Teucer's arrow far surpast,
Upon a rural hearth it pitch'd at last,
To Ceres built; where swains, in early spring,
With joy were wont their annual gifts to bring;
When first to view, above the furrow'd plain,
With pleasing verdure, rose the springing grain.
Thro' all the host applauding shouts resound;
The hills repeat them, and the woods around.

The bended bow bold Merion next assumes,
A shaft selects, and smooths its purple plumes;

Which

He plac'd it on the ſtring, and bending low,
With all his force collected, ſtrain'd the bow.
Up the light air the ſtarting arrow ſprung;
The tough bow crack'd; the twanging cordage ſung.
Beyond the reach of ſight the weapon drove,
And tow'r'd amidſt th' ethereal ſpace above:
But as it roſe, a heron croſs'd before,
From inland marſhes ſteering to the ſhore;
Under the wing it reach'd her with an wound;
Screaming ſhe wheel'd, then tumbled to the ground.
And thus the youth: Illuſtrious chiefs! I claim,
If not the prize, at leaſt ſuperior fame:
Ungovern'd ſtrength alone the arrow ſends;
To hit the mark, the ſhooter's art commends.
In mirthful mood the hero thus addreſs'd;
And all their favor and applauſe expreſs'd.

ULYSSES! take the bow, Atrides cries,
The ſilver bowl, brave Teucer! be thy prize.
In ev'ry art, my friends! you all excell;
And each deſerves a prize for ſhooting well:

For

For tho' the first rewards the victors claim,
Glory ye merit all, and lasting fame.
He said; and pond'ring in his grateful mind,
Distinguish'd honors for the dead design'd.

Warriors of Greece, and valiant aids from far,
Our firm associates in the works of war!
Here from a rock the Theban stream descends,
And to a lake its silver current sends;
Whose surface smooth, unruffled by the breeze,
The hills inverted shows and downward trees:
Ye daring youths! whose manly limbs divide
The mounting surge, and brave the rushing tide;
All ye, whom hopes of victory inspire,
Stand forth distinguish'd; let the crowd retire.
This costly armor shall the youth obtain,
Who comes victorious from the wat'ry plain;
That island compass'd, where the poplar grows
And in the lake its wav'ring image shows,
Who measuring back the liquid space, before
His rivals, shall regain the flow'ry shore.

This golden bowl is fix'd the second prize,
Of curious workmanship, and amplest size.

The hero thus: with thirst of glory fir'd,
Crete's valiant monarch to the prize aspir'd;
With Sparta's younger chief; Ulysses came;
And brave Clearchus emulous of fame,
A wealthy warrior from the Samian shore,
In cattle rich, and heaps of precious ore:
Distinguish'd in the midst the heroes stood,
Eager to plunge into the shining flood.

His brother's ardor purpos'd to restrain,
Atrides strove, and counsel'd thus, in vain:
Desist, my brother! shun th' unequal strife;
For late you stood upon the verge of life:
No mortal man his vigor can retain,
When flowing wounds have empty'd ev'ry vein.
If now you perish in the wat'ry way,
Grief upon grief shall cloud this mournful day,
Desist, respect my counsel, and be wise;
Some other Spartan in your place will rise.

To

To change his brother's purpose thus he try'd;
But Menelaus resolute reply'd:
Brother! in vain you urge me to forbear,
From love and fond affection prompt to fear;
For firm, as e'er before, my limbs remain,
To dash the fluid waves, or scour the plain.

He said, and went before. The heroes move
To the dark covert of a neighb'ring grove;
Which to the bank its shady walks extends,
Where mixing with the lake a riv'let ends.
Prompt to contend, their purple robes they loose,
Their figur'd vests and gold embroider'd shoes;
And thro' the grove descending to the strand,
Along the flow'ry bank in order stand.
As when, in some fair temple's sacred shrine,
A statue stands, express'd by skill divine,
Apollo's or the herald pow'r's, who brings
Jove's mighty mandates on his airy wings;
The form majestic awes the bending crowd:
In port and stature such, the heroes stood.

STARTING at once; with equal strokes, they sweep
The smooth expanse, and shoot into the deep;
The Cretan chief, exerting all his force,
His rivals far surpass'd, and led the course;
Behind Atrides, emulous of fame;
Clearchus next; and last Ulysses came.
And now they measur'd back the wat'ry space,
And saw from far the limits of the race.
Ulysses then, with thirst of glory fir'd,
The Samian left, and to the prize aspir'd;
Who, emulous, and dreading to be last,
With equal speed, the Spartan hero pass'd.
Alarm'd, the Cretan monarch strove, with pain,
His doubtful hopes of conquest to maintain;
Exerting ev'ry nerve, his limbs he ply'd,
And wishing, from afar, the shore descry'd:
For near and nearer still Ulysses prest;
The waves he felt rebounding from his breast.
With equal zeal for victory they strove;
When, gliding sudden from the roofs of JOVE,
Pallas approach'd; behind a cloud conceal'd,
Ulysses only saw her form reveal'd.

Majestic

Majeſtic by the hero's ſide ſhe ſtood;
Her ſhining ſandals preſs'd the trembling flood.
She whiſper'd ſoft, as when the weſtern breeze
Stirs the thick reeds, or ſhakes the ruſtling trees:
Still ſhall thy ſoul, with endleſs thirſt of fame,
Aſpire to victory, in ev'ry game.
The honors, which from bones and ſinews riſe,
Are lightly valu'd by the good and wiſe:
To envy ſtill they rouſe the human kind;
And oft, than courted, better far declin'd.
To brave Idomeneüs yield the race;
Contented to obtain the ſecond place.
The Goddeſs thus: while, ſtretching to the land,
With joy the Cretan chief approach'd the ſtrand;
Ulyſſes next arriv'd; and, ſpent with toil,
The weary Samian graſp'd the welcome ſoil.
But far behind the Spartan warrior lay,
Fatigu'd, and fainting, in the wat'ry way.
Thrice ſtruggling, from the lake, his head he rear'd;
And thrice, imploring aid, his voice was heard.
The Cretan monarch haſtes the youth to ſave,
And Ithacus again divides the wave:

With

With force renew'd their manly limbs they ply;
And from their breasts the whit'ning billows fly.
Full in the midst a rocky isle divides
The liquid space, and parts the silver tides;
Once cultivated, now with thickets green
O'erspread, two hillocks and a vale between.
Here dwelt an aged swain; his cottage stood
Under the cliffs, encompass'd by a wood.
From poverty secure, he heard afar,
In peace profound, the tumults of the war.
Mending a net before his rural gate,
From other toils repos'd, the peasant sat;
When first the voice of Menelaus came,
By ev'ning breezes wafted from the stream.
He rose; and, turning whence the voice was heard,
Far struggling in the deep the youth appear'd.
Hast'ning, his skiff he loos'd, and spread the sail;
Some present god supply'd a prosp'rous gale:
For as the Spartan chief, with toil subdu'd,
Hopeless of life, was sinking in the flood;
The swain approach'd, and in his barge receiv'd
Him safe, from danger imminent retriev'd.

UPON

Upon a willow's trunk Therſites ſat,
Contempt and laughter fated to create,
Where, bending from a hollow bank, it hung,
And rooted to the mould'ring ſurface clung;
He ſaw Atrides ſafe; and thus aloud,
With leer malign, addreſs'd the liſt'ning crowd.
Here on the flow'ry turf a hearth ſhall ſtand;
A hecatomb the fav'ring gods demand,
Who ſav'd Atrides in this dire debate;
And ſnatch'd the hero from the jaws of fate:
Without his aid we all might quit the field;
Ulyſſes, Ajax, and Tydides, yield:
His mighty arm alone the hoſt defends,
But dire diſaſter ſtill the chief attends:
Laſt ſun beheld him vanquiſh'd on the plain;
Then warriors ſav'd him, now a ſhepherd ſwain.
Defend him ſtill from perſecuting fate!
Protect the hero who protects the ſtate;
Guard him amidſt the dangers of the war;
And, when he ſwims, let aid be never far!
He ſaid; and ſcorn and laughter to excite
His features foul he writh'd, with envious ſpite,

Smiling

Smiling contempt; and pleas'd his ranc'rous heart
With aiming thus oblique a venom'd dart.
But joy'd not long; for ſoon the faithleſs wood,
Strain'd from the root, reſign'd him to the flood.
Plunging and ſputt'ring as his arms he ſpread,
A load of ſoil came thund'ring on his head,
Slipt from the bank: along the winding ſhore,
With laughter loud he heard the echoes roar,
When from the lake his crooked form he rear'd,
With horror pale, with blotting clay beſmear'd:
Then clamb'ring by the trunk, in ſad diſmay,
Which half immers'd with all its branches lay,
Confounded, to the tents he ſculk'd along,
Amidſt the ſhouts and inſults of the throng.

Now cloth'd in public view the heroes ſtand,
With ſcepters grac'd the enſigns of command.
The Cretan monarch, as his prize, aſſumes
The poliſh'd helmet, crown'd with waving plumes,
The ſilver mail, the buckler's weighty round,
Th' embroider'd belt, with golden buckles bound.

The

The ſecond prize Laertes' ſon receiv'd,
With leſs applauſe from multitudes deceiv'd;
The firſt he could have purchas'd; but declin'd,
And yielded, to the martial maid reſign'd.

Thus they. The Thebans, near the Cadmean gate,
Around their pyres in ſilent ſorrow wait:
Hopeleſs and ſad they mourn'd their heroes ſlain,
The beſt and braveſt on their native plain.
The king himſelf, in deeper ſorrow, mourn'd;
With rage and mingled grief his boſom burn'd.
Like the grim lion, when his offspring ſlain
He ſees, and round him drawn the hunter's train;
Couch'd in the ſhade with fell intent he lies,
And glares upon the foes with burning eyes:
Such Creon ſeem'd: hot indignation drain'd
Grief's wat'ry ſources, and their flow reſtrain'd.
Upon a turret o'er the gate he ſtood,
And ſaw the Argives, like a ſhady wood,
Extended wide; and dreading fraud deſign'd,
Still to the plain his watchful eyes confin'd,

Suſpicious

Suſpicious from his hatred, and the pow'r
Of reſtleſs paſſions, which his heart devour:
And when at ev'n's approach the hoſt retir'd,
And from the labors of the day reſpir'd,
Within the walls he drew his martial pow'rs,
And kept with ſtricteſt watch the gates and tow'rs.

SOON as the night poſſeſs'd th' ethereal plain,
And o'er the nations ſtretch'd her ſilent reign,
The guards were plac'd, and to the gentle ſway
Of ſleep ſubdu'd, the weary warriors lay.
Tydides only wak'd, by anxious care
Diſtracted, ſtill he mourn'd his abſent fair,
Deeming her loſt; his ſlighted counſel mov'd
Laſting reſentment, and the truce approv'd:
Contending paſſions ſhook his mighty frame;
As warring winds impel the ocean's ſtream,
When ſouth and eaſt with mingled rage contend,
And in a tempeſt on the deep deſcend:
Now, ſtretch'd upon the couch, ſupine he lay;
Then, riſing anxious, wiſh'd the morning ray.
Impatient thus, at laſt, his turbid mind,
By various counſels variouſly inclin'd,

The

The chief addreſs'd: Or ſhall I now recall
Th' Etolian warriors from the Theban wall;
Obey the warning by a goddeſs giv'n,
Nor ſlight her counſel dictated from heav'n?
Or ſhall I try, by one deciding blow,
The war at once to end, and cruſh the foe?
This pleaſes moſt; nor ſhall the voice of fame
The daring deed, in after ages, blame.
No truce I ſwore, but ſhun'd it, and remov'd,
Alone diſſenting while the reſt approv'd.
Soon as the morn, with early light reveal'd,
Has call'd the Theban warriors to the field;
Againſt the town, I'll lead my martial pow'rs,
And fire with flaming brands her guardleſs tow'rs:
The bane of Greece, whence dire debate aroſe
To bid the peaceful nations firſt be foes;
Where Tydeus fell, and many heroes more,
The blood of princes mix'd with vulgar gore.
The public voice of Greece for vengeance calls;
And ſhall applaud the ſtroke by which ſhe falls.
He purpos'd: but the gods, who honor right,
Deny'd to treaſon what is due to might.

Soon with new light appear'd the morning fair;
The Theban warriors to the field repair,
To fell the groves; with many a harneſs'd wain,
The woody heights were crowded and the plain.
Tydides ſaw; and, iſſuing from his tent,
In arms complete, to call his warriors, went.
Their leader's martial voice the ſoldiers heard
Each in his tent, and at the call appear'd
In ſhining arms. Dëiphobus began,
For virtue fam'd, a venerable man.
Him Tydeus lov'd; and in his faithful hand
Had plac'd the ſceptre of ſupreme command,
To rule the ſtate; when, from his native tow'rs,
To Thebes the hero led his martial pow'rs;
His ſon, an infant, to his care reſign'd,
With ſage advice to form his tender mind.
The hero thus: Illuſtrious chief! declare
What you intend, and whither point the war.
The truce commenc'd, you cannot, and be juſt,
The Thebans now aſſault, who freely truſt
To public faith engag'd: unarm'd they go
Far thro' the woods and plains, nor fear a foe.

His

His leader's purpoſe thus the warrior try'd;
And, inly vex'd, Tydides thus reply'd:
Father! thy words from ignorance proceed;
The truce I ſwore not, nor approv'd the deed.
If others did, let them their pow'rs reſtrain,
Ling'ring inactive on the hoſtile plain:
The works of war abandon'd, let them ſhed
Their unavailing ſorrows o'er the dead:
Or aim the dart, or hurl the diſk in air;
Some paultry preſents ſhall the victors ſhare.
Warriors we came, in nobler ſtrifes to dare;
To fight and conquer in the liſts of war;
To conquer Thebes: and Jove himſelf ordains,
With wreaths of triumph, to reward our pains.
Wide to receive us ſtand the Theban gates;
A ſpacious entry, op'ned by the fates,
To take deſtruction in; their turrets ſtand
Defenceleſs, and expect the flaming brand.
Now let us ſnatch th' occaſion while we may,
Years waſte in vain and periſh by delay,
That, Thebes o'erthrown, our tedious toils may ceaſe,
And we behold our native walls in peace.

TYDIDES thus: the antient warrior burns
With indignation juſt, and thus returns:
O ſon! unworthy of th' illuſtrious line
From which you ſpring; your ſire's reproach and mine!
Did I e'er teach you, juſtice to diſclaim;
And ſteal, by treachery, diſhoneſt fame?
The truce ſubſiſts with all the reſt; are we
Alone excepted, unengag'd and free?
Why, warriors! do not then theſe hoſtile tow'rs,
Againſt us, ſend at once their martial pow'rs?
And are we ſafe, but that the treaty ſtands
And from unequal force protects our bands?
In this our foes confide; the dead they burn,
And mix with tears their aſhes in the urn.
Their tow'rs defenceleſs, and their gates unbarr'd,
Shall we with wrongs their confidence reward?
No; tho' each warrior of this num'rous band
Should yield to execute what you command:
Yet would not I, obedient to thy will,
Blot my long labors with a deed ſo ill.

Whatever

Whatever hard or dang'rous you propoſe,
Tho' old and weak, I ſhun not, nor oppoſe:
But what the gods command us to forbear,
The prudent will avoid, the braveſt fear.
He ſaid; and to the ground his buckler flung;
On the hard ſoil the brazen orbit rung:
The reſt, approving, dropt upon the field
His pond'rous jav'lin, each, and ſhining ſhield.

The warlike ſon of Tydeus ſtraight reſign'd,
To dire diſorder, all his mighty mind,
And ſudden wrath; as when the troubled air,
From kindled light'ning, ſhines with fiery glare:
With fury ſo inflam'd, the hero burn'd,
And frowning to Dëiphobus return'd:
I know thee, wretch! and mark thy conſtant aim,
To teach the hoſt their leader thus to blame.
Long have I borne your pride; your rev'rend age,
A guardian's name, ſuppreſs'd my kindling rage;
But to protect your inſolence, no more
Shall theſe avail, and ſcreen it as before.

HE

He ſaid; and more his fury to provoke,
Replying thus, the aged warrior ſpoke:
Vain youth! unmov'd thy angry threats I hear;
When tyrants threaten, ſlaves alone ſhould fear:
To me is ev'ry ſervile part unknown,
To glory in a ſmile, or fear a frown.
Your mighty ſire I knew by counſel rul'd;
His fierceſt tranſports ſober reaſon cool'd.
But wild and lawleſs, like the ſtormy wind,
The ſport of paſſion, impotent, and blind,
The deſp'rate paths of folly you purſue,
And ſcorn inſtruction with a lofty brow:
Yet know, proud prince! my purpoſe I retain,
And ſee thy threat'ning eye-balls roll in vain;
Never, obſequious to thy mad command,
Againſt the foe I'll lift a hoſtile hand;
Till, righteouſly fulfil'd, the truce expires
Which heav'n has witneſs'd and the ſacred fires.

He ſaid; and, by his ſharp reproaches ſtung,
With ſudden hand, his launce the hero flung:

Too

Too ſure the aim; his faithful friend it found,
And op'ned in his ſide a deadly wound:
Stagg'ring he fell; and, on the verge of death,
In words like theſe reſign'd his parting breath:
O Diomed, my ſon! for thee I fear:
Sure heav'n is angry, and its vengeance near;
For whom the gods diſtinguiſh by their hate,
Themſelves are made the miniſters of fate;
Far from their ſide, the deſtin'd victims drive
Their friends intent to ſuccor and retrieve.
Ere yet their vengeance falls, the pow'rs invoke,
While uninflicted hangs the fatal ſtroke;
And rule the tranſports of your wrath, leſt fear
Make ſound advice a ſtranger to your ear.
Speaking he dy'd; his gen'rous ſpirit fled
To mix with heroes in th' Elyſian ſhade.

AMAZ'D, at firſt, th' Etolian warriors ſtood;
No voice, no action, thro' the wond'ring crowd;
Silent they ſtood, like rows of foreſt trees,
When JOVE's dread thunder quells the ſummer
breeze:

But

But soon on ev'ry side a tumult rose,
Loud, as the ocean, when a tempest blows;
Disorder wild the mingling ranks confounds,
The voice of sorrow mix'd with angry sounds.
On ev'ry side against the chief appears
A brazen bulwark rais'd of shields, and spears,
Threat'ning revenge. But from his thigh he drew
His shining blade, and on the phalanx flew;
With gesture fierce the threat'ning steel he wav'd;
But check'd its fury, and the people sav'd:
As the good shepherd spares his tender flock,
And lightens, when he strikes, the falling crook.
The crowd dividing shun'd the hero's ire;
As from a lion's rage the swains retire,
When dreadful o'er the mangled prey he stands,
By brandish'd darts unaw'd and flaming brands.

AND now the flame of sudden rage supprest,
Remorse and sorrow stung the hero's breast.
Distracted thro' the scatt'ring crowd he went,
And sought the dark recesses of his tent;

He

He enter'd: but the menial ſervants, bred
To wait his coming, ſtraight with horror fled.
Againſt the ground he daſh'd his bloody dart;
And utter'd thus the ſwellings of his heart:
Why fly my warriors? why the menial train,
Who joy'd before to meet me from the plain,
Why ſhun they now their lord's approach; nor bring,
To waſh my bloody hands, the cleanſing ſpring?
Too well, alas! my fatal rage they know,
To them more dreadful now than to the foe;
No enemy, alas! this ſpear has ſtain'd,
With hoſtile gore in glorious battle drain'd:
My guardian's blood it ſhews, whoſe hoary hairs
Still watch'd my welfare with a father's cares.
Thou Pow'r ſupreme! whoſe unreſiſted ſway
The fates of men and mortal things obey!
If wiſe and good, why did thy hand impart
So fierce an impulſe to this bounding heart?
By fury rul'd and impotent of mind,
No awe reſtrains me, and no tie can bind:
Hence, by the madneſs of my rage o'erthrown,
My father's friend lies murder'd, and my own.

He ſaid; and, yielding to his fierce deſpair,
With both his hands he rent his rooted hair;
And, where his locks in ſhining ringlets grew,
A load of aſhes from the hearth he threw,
Rolling in duſt: but now around the ſlain
His warriors ſtood, aſſembled on the plain;
For total inſurrection ripe they ſtood;
Their angry murmurs roſe to tumult loud.

Ulysses ſoon the dire diſorder heard;
And preſent to explore the cauſe appear'd:
The hero came, and, 'midſt the warriors, found
Dëiphobus extended on the ground.
A flood of ſorrow ſtarted to his eyes,
But ſoon he check'd each ſymptom of ſurprize
With prudent care; while preſſing round the chief
Each ſtrove to ſpeak the univerſal grief:
Their mingled ſpears in wild diſorder ſhook;
Like the ſharp reeds along ſome winding brook,
When thro' the leafleſs woods the north wind blows,
Parent of ice and thick deſcending ſnows:

Now

Now fell revenge had bath'd in ſtreams of blood,
And pow'r in vain her deſp'rate courſe withſtood:
But Ithacus, well ſkill'd in ev'ry art
To fix, or change each purpoſe of the heart;
Their ſtern decrees by ſoft perſuaſion broke;
And anſw'ring, thus with prudent purpoſe ſpoke:
Warriors! your gen'rous rage approve I muſt;
Dire was the deed; the purpos'd vengeance juſt;
But, when the kings in full aſſembly ſit;
To them the crime, and puniſhment commit:
For raſh procedure wrongs the faireſt cauſe;
And private juſtice ſtill inſults the laws.
Now to your tents your ſhields and launces bear;
Theſeus expects us, and the hour is near:
The altars flame; the prieſts in order ſtand,
With ſacrifice, to hallow ev'ry band:
And to the covert of a tent convey,
Sav'd from the ſcorching winds and ſolar ray,
Theſe dear remains; till Theſeus has decreed
Diſtinguiſh'd obſequies to grace the dead.
The hero thus; and, from his ſhoulders, threw
The regal cloak of gold, and ſhining blue;

Which o'er the ſlain, with prudent care, he ſpread,
His ghaſtly features, from the crowd, to ſhade.
Thrice to his eyes a flood of ſorrow came;
Thrice on the brink he check'd the guſhing ſtream
In act to flow; his riſing ſighs ſuppreſt;
Patient of grief, he lock'd it in his breaſt.

THE

THE

EPIGONIAD.

BOOK VI.

TO ſad deſpair th' Etolian chief reſign'd,
And dire remorſe, which ſtung his tortur'd mind,
From early dawn, in duſt extended lay,
By all abandon'd till the ſetting ray.
'Twas then Caſſandra came; and, at the door,
Thrice call'd her lord: he ſtarted from the floor:
In ſullen majeſty his chair of ſtate,
Full in the midſt oppoſed to the gate,
The hero preſs'd: the anxious maid drew near,
By love excited, and reſtrain'd by fear:
Trembling before the chief ſhe ſtood; and held
A bowl of wine with temp'ring mixtures quell'd;
The fragrant juice which fam'd Theſprotia yields,
The vintage of her cliffs, and ſunny fields.

And

And thus: Dread lord! reject not with disdain
A present offer'd by a humble swain.
This bowl receive, of gentle force to charm
Distress, and of its rigor grief disarm.
How vain to grieve for ever for the past!
No hour recals the actions of the last:
Nor groans, nor sighs, nor streams of sorrow shed,
From their long slumber can awake the dead.
When death's stern pow'r his iron sceptre lays
On the cold lips, the vital spirit strays
To worlds unknown: nor can the dead perceive
The tears of friends or lovers when they grieve.

To sooth his passion, thus the virgin try'd;
With wonder, thus th'Etolian chief reply'd:
Say who you are, who thus approach my seat,
Unaw'd by good Dëiphobus's fate?
When all avoid my presence, nor appear,
By indignation banish'd, or by fear.
What is thy name? what deed of mine could bind
To friendship so unchang'd thy constant mind;
Still to survive the horror of a crime,
Whose color blots the registers of time?

THE hero thus. Caſſandra thus replies:
Iphicles is my name; my country lies
Where Antirrihum's rocky ſhores divide,
Extended in the deep, th' Ionian tide.
There dwells my ſire poſſeſt of ample ſtore,
In flocks and herds and gold's refulgent ore.
Œneus his name; his veſſels on the main,
From rich Heſperia waft him yearly gain,
And that fam'd land, whoſe promontories run
Far to the weſt, beneath the ſetting ſun;
Where ev'ry cliff with veins of ſilver gleams,
And ſands of gold lie glitt'ring in the ſtreams.
In Hymen's ſacred ties two ſons he bred,
Me, and my valiant brother Lycomed.
The youngeſt I, was charg'd his flocks to keep:
My brother rul'd his galleys on the deep.
Once as he left Iberia's wealthy ſhore,
With Bœtic fleeces fraught and precious ore;
Phœnician pirates waited on the ſtrand,
Where high Pachynus ſtretches from the land;
In that fam'd iſle where Ætna lifts his ſpires,
With ſmoke obſcure, and blows his ſulph'rous fires.
Behind

Behind the cliffs conceal'd, the treach'rous band
Waited the Greeks, deſcending on the ſtrand:
My brother there with twenty youths they ſlew;
Their ſudden arrows from an ambuſh flew.
Dire was the deed; and ſtill my ſorrows ſtream,
Whene'er that argument of woe I name;
And grief prevails; but, in your preſence, moſt;
You ſtill recal the brother whom I loſt:
For ſuch he was in lineaments of face,
In martial ſtature, and majeſtic grace;
Tho' leſs in all; in form inferior far;
And ſtill, tho' valiant, leſs in works of war.
Hence, deeply rooted in my conſtant heart,
You challenge, as your own, a brother's part:
And I alone, of all the hoſt, remain
To ſhare your grief and ſuffer in your pain.

Thus by an artful tale, the virgin ſtrove
To ſhun diſcov'ry, and conceal her love:
Yet ſtill her looks, her geſtures, all expreſs'd
The maid; her love in bluſhes ſtood confeſs'd.

Tydides ſaw; and quickly, to his thought,
Each circumſtance the fair Caſſandra brought.
Silent he ſat; and fix'd in deep ſurprize,
Her fluſhing features mark'd and downcaſt eyes.
He thus reply'd: The native truth reveal;
And, what I aſk you, hope not to conceal.
Or ſhall I credit what you now have ſaid,
Œneus your ſire, your brother Lycomed?
Or art thou ſhe, whoſe beauty firſt did move,
Within my peaceful breaſt, the rage of love?

With look and voice ſevere, the hero ſpoke.
Aw'd and abaſh'd, the conſcious virgin ſhook;
She dropt the ſilver goblet on the ground;
The fragrant liquor drench'd the pavement round
And thus Tydides with a frown addreſs'd:
Thy art is uſeleſs, and the truth confeſs'd;
Nor can that fair diſguiſe of martial arms
And male attire, conceal thy fatal charms.
Thoſe eyes I ſee, whoſe ſoft inchantment ſtole
My peace; and ſtir'd a tempeſt in my ſoul:

By their mild light, in innocence array'd,
To guilty madness was my heart betray'd.
Dëiphobus is dead; his mournful ghost,
Lamenting, wanders on the Stygian coast;
And blames my wrath. Oh! that the sun, which gave
Light to this birth, had set upon thy grave;
And he had liv'd! now lifeless on the plain
A corpse he lies, and number'd with the slain.

The hero ended thus; with melting eye,
The virgin turn'd, unable to reply,
In sorrow graceful, as the queen of love
Who mourn'd Adonis in the Syrian grove,
Confounded and abash'd, she left the tent,
And thro' the host in silent anguish went,
Far to the left; where, in a lonely wood,
To Ceres built, a rural temple stood;
By swains frequented once, but now the place
Unsightly shrubs o'erspread and weeds disgrace.
Thither Cassandra went; and at the shrine,
With suppliant voice address'd the pow'r divine:

Hear

Hear me, dread genius of this sacred grove!
Let my complaints thy sov'reign pity move.
To seek the friendly shelter of thy dome,
With heart unstain'd, and guiltless hands, I come:
Love is my crime; and, in thy rural seat,
From infamy, I seek a safe retreat.
By blame unmerited, and cold neglect,
Banish'd I come; receive me and protect!
She pray'd, and ent'ring, 'gainst a pillar, staid
Her launce; and on the floor her armor laid.
Then falling prostrate pour'd a flood of tears,
With present ills oppress'd and future fears.

'Twas then the herald of the queen of love,
Zelotypé, descended in the grove,
By Venus sent; but still her counsels fail'd;
And Pallas with superior sway prevail'd:
The phantom enter'd, and assum'd a form,
Pale as the moon appearing thro' a storm;
In Amyclea's shape disguis'd she came;
The same her aspect, and her voice the same.

Cassandra

Cassandra saw; and sudden horror froze
Her veins; erect her parted locks arose,
Stir'd from the roots: impatient thus the maid,
With trembling lips, in fault'ring accents said:
My lov'd, my honor'd, parent! have my groans
From death's deep slumber, rous'd thy sacred bones:
I hop'd that nothing could your peace molest;
Nor mortal cares disturb eternal rest;
That safe for ever on th' Elysian shore,
You heard of human misery no more.

Cassandra thus; and thus the Paphian maid:
Your gen'rous love, my child, is ill repaid;
Your griefs I feel, and bear a parent's part,
Tho' blood no more returns to warm my heart;
And that, which first your mortal being bred,
To dust lies mould'ring, in its earthy bed.
To Calydon, my child, with speed return;
Your father grieves, your gay companions mourn;
He deems you lost, and desp'rate of his state,
By grief subdu'd, invokes his ling'ring fate;

Incessant

Inceſſant tears bedew his wrinkled face,
And aſhes foul his hoary locks diſgrace.
Return, return! nor let miſjudging pride
With further errors ſtrive the paſt to hide.
Return, once more to bliſs his aged eyes,
Or, by your guilty ſtay a parent dies.

She ended thus. Her arms Caſſandra ſpread
To fold, in cloſe embrace, the parting ſhade;
In vain; for, ſtarting from her graſp, it flew,
And, gliding thro' the ſhady walks, withdrew.
And now the virgin waits the riſing morn,
With purpoſe fix'd impatient to return.
When, thro' the broken clouds, a glimm'ring ray
Of early dawn foretold approaching day;
The ſpear ſhe graſp'd, and on her temples plac'd
The golden caſque, with various plumage grac'd;
Tydides' gift, when in the ranks of fight
The brave Clytander ſunk beneath his might.
The gods ſhe call'd; and, bending to the ground,
Their aid invok'd with reverence profound.

Then

Then left the dome; and where Ismenus strays,
Winding thro' thickest woods his wat'ry maze,
Her way pursu'd: a hostile band drew near;
Their tread she heard, and saw their armor clear;
Chief of the Theban youth; the herds they drove,
And flocks collected from the hills above.
For thus, the Paphian goddess had betray'd,
To hands of cruel foes, the guiltless maid;
Whom Thebes might hold an hostage for her lord,
To awe him, and restrain his wasteful sword.

By sudden terror check'd, at first she stood;
Then turn'd, and sought the covert of the wood;
Nor so escap'd: her glitt'ring armor shone,
The starry helmet and the lofty cone,
Full to the glowing east; its golden rays
Her winding flight betray'd thro' all its maze.
The Thebans saw; and, rushing 'midst the shade
With shouts of triumph, seiz'd the trembling maid.
Amaz'd and pale, before the hostile band,
She stood; and dropt the jav'lin from her hand:
O spare my life! she cry'd, nor wealth, nor fame
To purchase in the works of war, I came.

No

No hate to you, I bear, nor Creon's ſway
Condemn, whoſe laws the ſons of Thebes obey:
Me hapleſs friendſhip hither led, to ſhare,
With Diomed, the dangers of the war.
I now return and quit the martial ſtrife,
My ſire to ſuccor on the verge of life;
Who cruſh'd beneath a load of ſorrow bends,
And to the grave, with painful ſteps, deſcends.
But if the plea of pity you reject,
The ſtronger ties of equity reſpect:
A truce we ſwore; JOVE witneſſed the deed;
On him who breaks it, vengeance will ſucceed.

THUS as the virgin ſpoke, Phericles ey'd
The arms ſhe wore; and ſternly thus reply'd:
Ill-fated wretch! that panoply to wear;
The ſame my brother once in fight did bear;
Whom fierce Tydides, with ſuperior might,
O'erthrew and vanquiſh'd in the ranks of fight.
If with his foe my brother's ſpoils you ſhar'd,
A mark of love, or merited reward;

Prepare

Prepare to yield them and resign thy breath;
To vengeance due: Clytander claims thy death.

FROWNING he spoke, and drew his shining blade;
Beneath the lifted steel, th' unhappy maid
Confounded stoop'd: Menœtius catch'd the stroke
On his broad shield; and interposing spoke:
Brave youth! respect my counsel, and suspend
The sudden vengeance which you now intend.
The chiefs and rulers of the Theban state,
In full assembly, at the Cadmean gate,
A monument for great Leophron rear;
His name, atchievements, and descent to bear.
Thither let this devoted youth be led,
An off'ring grateful to the hero's shade:
Nor shall Clytander less the deed approve;
Or friendly zeal applaud, and feel our love;
When fame shall tell, in Pluto's gloomy reign,
How stern Tydides mourns this warrior slain.
Thus ignorantly they; nor knew the peace
Of happy patriots, when their labors cease;
That fell revenge and life-consuming hate
Find no admittance, to molest their state.

AND

And now they led the captive cross the plain;
Scarce could her trembling knees their load sustain;
Thrice had her fault'ring tongue her sex reveal'd,
But conscious shame oppos'd it and conceal'd.
Their monarch at the Cadmean gate they found,
In mournful state, with all his peers around.
Oblations to Leophron's mighty shade,
In honey, milk, and fragrant wines they paid.
And thus Lycastes' son address'd the king:
A grateful off'ring to your rites we bring.
This youth, the friend of Diomed, we found,
Clasp'd in the armour which Clyander own'd;
My brother's spoils, by Diomed possest,
When his keen jav'lin pierc'd the hero's breast.
Soon had my rage the hostile deed repaid,
With vengeance grateful to his mournful shade;
But public griefs the first atonements claim,
And heroes of a more distinguish'd name.
Leophron, once his country's pride and boast,
Andremon too, the bulwark of the host,
His blood demand; for when their souls shall know
The sweet revenge, in Pluto's shades below,

Pleas'd with our zeal, will each illustrious ghost,
With lighter footsteps, press th' Elysian coast.

He spoke; the princes all at once incline;
The rest, with shouts, applaud the dire design.
An altar soon of flow'ry turf they raise:
On ev'ry side, the sacred torches blaze:
The bowls, in shining order, plac'd around;
The fatal knife was whetted for the wound.
Decreed to perish, stood the helpless fair;
Like some soft fawn, when, in the hunter's snare
Involv'd, she sees him from his seat arise,
His brandish'd truncheon dreads, and hears his cries:
Silent she stands, to barb'rous force resign'd,
In anguish soft, dissolv'd her tender mind.
The priests in order ev'ry rite prepar'd;
Her neck and bosom, for the blow, they bar'd;
The helmet loos'd, the buckled mail unbound,
Whose shining circles fenc'd her neck around.
Down sunk the fair disguise; and full to sight
The virgin stood, with charms divinely bright.

The

The comely ringlets of her flowing hair,
Such as the wood-nymphs wear, and Naiades fair,
Hung loose; her middle by a zone embrac'd,
Which fix'd the floating garment round her waist.
Venus herself divine effulgence shed
O'er all her stature, and her lovely head;
Such as in spring the color'd blossoms show,
When on their op'ning leaves the zephyrs blow:
Amazement seiz'd the chiefs; and all around,
With murmurs mix'd the wond'ring crowds resound.
Most vote to spare: the angry monarch cries:
Ye ministers, proceed! the captive dies.
Shall any here, by weak compassion mov'd,
A captive spare by stern Tydides lov'd?
The scourge of Thebes, whose wide destroying hand
Has thinn'd our armies in their native land,
And slain my son: by all the gods I swear,
Whose names, to cite in vain, the nations fear,
That none, he loves, shall ever scape my rage:
The vulgar plea I scorn, of sex, or age.
Ev'n she, who now appears with ev'ry grace
Adorn'd, each charm of stature and of face;

Ev'n

Ev'n tho' from Venus ſhe could claim the prize,
Her life to vengeance forfeited, ſhe dies.

STERNLY the monarch ended. All were ſtill,
And heard, without reply, the ſov'reign will:
Lycaon's valiant ſon except; alone
His gen'rous ardor thus oppos'd the throne:
Dread ſov'reign! liſten with a patient ear,
And what I now ſhall offer, deign to hear.
When firſt by force we ſeiz'd this captive maid,
The truce was vi'lated, our faith betray'd;
And juſtice, which, in war and peace, prevails
Alike, and weighs their deeds with equal ſcales,
Her freedom claims, with preſents to atone
For what our rage perfidiouſly has done:
Let us not, now, to further wrongs proceed;
But fear the curſe for perjury decreed.

PHERICLES thus: and, with a ſtern regard,
His indignation thus the king declar'd:
Vain giddy youth! forbear, with factious breath,
To rouſe my juſtice to pronounce thy death:

In

In opposition, first of all you move,
While others hear in silence, and approve.
Your bold presumption check, and learn to dread
My vengeance thund'red on your wretched head.

FROWNING he ended thus: his threats defy'd,
With gen'rous heat Phericles thus reply'd:
Princes! attend, and trust my words sincere;
The king I honor, and his will revere,
When truth gives sanction to his just commands,
Nor common right in opposition stands;
Yet gen'rous minds a principle retain,
Which promises and threats attempt in vain,
Which claims dominion, by the gods imprest,
The love of justice in the human breast:
By this inspir'd, against superior might,
I rise undaunted in the cause of right,
And now, by all th' avenging gods, I swear,
Whose names, to cite in vain, the nations fear;
That no bold warrior of the Theban bands,
This maid shall violate with hostile hands;

While

While these my arms have force the launce to wield,
And lift in her defence this pond'rous shield,
Not ev'n the king himself, whose sov'reign sway
The martial sons of sacred Thebes obey.

He said; and, by his bold example fir'd,
Twelve warriors rose, with equal zeal inspir'd.
With shining steel, the altar they surround,
The fire now flaming, and the victim crown'd.
On ev'ry side in wild disorder move
The thick compacted crowds; as when a grove,
Rock'd by a sudden whirlwind, bends and strains,
From right to left, along the woodland plains:
Fell discord soon had rag'd, in civil blood,
With wide destruction not to be withstood;
For from his seat the angry monarch sprung,
And lifted, for the blow, the sceptre hung:
But 'midst the tumult Clytophon appear'd,
Approv'd for wisdom, and with rev'rence heard.
Straight, by the robe, the furious chief he seiz'd,
And thus, with sage advice, his wrath appeas'd:

Hear,

Hear, mighty prince! respect the words of age,
And calm the wasteful tempest of thy rage;
The public welfare to revenge prefer,
For nations suffer when their sov'reigns err.
It ill becomes us now, when hostile pow'rs
With strictest siege invest our strait'ned tow'rs;
It ill becomes us thus, with civil arms,
To wound the state, and aggravate our harms.
Hear, all ye princes! what to me appears
A prudent counsel, worthy of your ears:
Let us inquire, if in our hands we hold
A life esteem'd by Diomed the bold:
If, in his breast, those tender passions move,
Which youth and beauty kindle and improve;
Our mandates freely to his tent we send,
For to our will his haughty soul must bend:
Nor dares he, while the Theban walls retain
A pledge so dear, oppose us on the plain;
But must submit, whenever we require,
Or with his pow'rs to aid us, or retire.

He said; the monarch painfully supprest
His burning rage, and lock'd it in his breast.

He

He thus reply'd: Thy prudent words inſpire
Pacific counſels, and ſubdue mine ire:
But if in peace I rul'd the Theban ſtate,
Nor hoſtile armies thund'red at my gate;
They had not dar'd, with inſolence and ſpight,
My counſels to oppoſe and ſcorn my might.
He ſaid, and to his ſeat again retir'd;
While ſudden tranſport ev'ry breaſt inſpir'd;
As ſwains rejoice, when, from the troubled ſkies,
By breezes ſwept, a gather'd tempeſt flies;
With wiſh'd return the ſun exerts his beams,
To chear the woods and gild the ſhining ſtreams.

MEAN while Tydides, thro' the tented plain,
With wiſhing eyes, Caſſandra ſought, in vain;
At ev'ry leader of the bands inquir'd;
Then, ſad and hopeleſs, to his tent retir'd.
'Twas then his grief the bounds of ſilence broke,
And thus in ſecret to himſelf he ſpoke:
Me ſure, of all men's ſons, the gods have curſt
With their chiefeſt plagues, the greateſt and the worſt;

Doom'd

Doom'd to disasters, from my earliest hour;
Not wise to shun nor patient to endure.
From me the source, unnumber'd ills proceed
To all my friends; Dëiphobus is dead!
His soul excluded seeks the nether skies,
And wrong'd Cassandra from my presence flies.
Me surely, at my birth, the gods design'd
Their rod of wrath, to scourge the human kind;
For slaughter form'd, with brutal fury brave,
Prompt to destroy, but impotent to save.
How could my madness blame thee, gen'rous maid!
And, with my crime, thy innocence upbraid!
Dëiphobus is fall'n! but not by thee;
Thy only fault, alas! was love to me:
For this, in plated steel thy limbs were dress'd,
A weighty shield thy tender arm oppress'd:
For this, thou didst to hostile fields repair,
And court such objects as distract the fair;
Patient above thy sex! an ill reward,
Blame and unjust reproach, was all you shar'd.
By my unkindness banish'd, now you roam,
And seek, thro' perilous paths, your distant home:

To mountain wolves expos'd, a helpless prey,
And men unjust more terrible than they.
Save her, ye gods! and let me stand the aim
Of JOVE's all-dreaded bolt, and scorching flame.

THUS plain'd the hero till the setting ray
Withdrew, and ev'ning shades expell'd the day;
Then in his tent, before his lofty seat,
Appear'd a herald from the Theban state;
The hero's knees, with trembling hands, he press'd,
And with his message thus the chief address'd:
Hear, mighty prince! the tidings which I bring,
From Thebes assembled, and the Theban king.
An armed warrior of your native train,
At early dawn, was seiz'd upon the plain.
What others did, forgive, if I relate;
Creon commands me and the Theban state.
A fairer youth, in martial arms, ne'er came
To court bright honor in the fields of fame.
A casque of polish'd steel his temples press'd,
The golden cone with various plumage dress'd;

A ſilver mail embrac'd his body round,
And greaves of braſs his ſlender ancles bound:
To Thebes well known the panoply he wore,
The ſame, which once, renown'd Clytander bore.
Our warriors drag'd him to the Cadmean gate,
Where Creon, with the rulers of the ſtate,
Aſſembled ſat; the trembling captive ſtood,
With arms ſurrounded, and th' inſulting crowd.
O ſpare my life! he cry'd, nor wealth, nor fame
To purchaſe in the works of war, I came.
No hate to you, I bear, or Creon's ſway,
Whoſe ſov'reign will the ſons of Thebes obey.
Me luckleſs friendſhip hither led, to ſhare,
With Diomed, the dangers of the war.
I now return, and quit the martial ſtrife,
My ſire to ſuccor on the verge of life;
Whoſe feeble age the preſent aid demands,
And kind aſſiſtance of my filial hands.
His words inclin'd the wiſeſt and the beſt,
And ſome their gen'rous ſympathy expreſt:
But factious multitudes, his guiltleſs head
With threats, demanded, to avenge the dead:

And

And thus the king: My countrymen, attend!
In this, let all your loud contention end:
If Diomed, to save this valu'd life,
The field abandons and the martial strife;
The captive safe, with presents, I'll restore,
Of brass, and steel, and gold's refulgent ore:
But if these terms the haughty chief shall slight,
And for the Argives still exert his might;
Before our heroes' tombs, this youth shall bleed,
To please the living, and avenge the dead.
His sentence all approv'd; and to your ear,
From Thebes assembled, I the message bear;
And must your answer crave, without delay;
The multitude already blames my stay.

Thus as he spoke, contending passions strove,
With force oppos'd, the hero's soul to move;
As shifting winds impel the ocean's tide,
And sway the reeling waves from side to side:
Rage dictated revenge; but tender fear,
From love and pity, warn'd him to forbear:

Till,

Till, like a lion, fiercer from his pain,
These words broke forth in wrath and high disdain:
Go, tell your tyrant, that he tempts a soul,
Whch presents cannot win, nor threats control:
Not form'd, like his, to mock at ev'ry tie;
With perjury to sport, and heav'n defy.
A common league the Argive leaders swore,
And seal'd the sacred tie with wine and gore:
My faith was plighted then, and ne'er shall fail,
Nor Creon's arts, to change me, aught avail.
But tell him loud, that all the host may hear,
And Thebes thro' all her warriors learn to fear;
If any, from himself, or by command,
The captive violates with hostile hand;
That all shall quickly rue the guilty deed,
When, to requite it, multitudes shall bleed.

Sternly the hero ended, and resign'd,
To fierce disorder, all his mighty mind.
Already in his thoughts, with vengeful hands.
He dealt destruction 'midst the Theban bands,

In

In fancy ſaw the tott'ring turrets fall,
And led his warriors o'er the level'd wall.
Rous'd with the thought, from his high ſeat he ſprung;
And graſp'd the ſword, which 'midſt his armor hung;
The ſhining blade he balanc'd thrice in air;
His launce he next review'd, and armor fair.
When, hanging 'midſt the coſtly panoply,
A ſcarf embroider'd met the hero's eye,
Which fair Caſſandra's ſkilful hands had wrought;
A preſent for her lord, in ſecret brought;
That day, when firſt he led his martial train
In arms, to combat on the Theban plain.
As ſome ſtrong charm, which magic ſounds compoſe,
Suſpends a downward torrent as it flows;
Checks in the precipice its headlong courſe,
And calls it trembling upwards to its ſource:
Such ſeem'd the robe, which, to the hero's eyes,
Made the fair artiſt in her charms to riſe.
His rage, ſuſpended in its full career,
To love reſigns, to grief and tender fear.
Glad would he now his former words revoke,
And change the purpoſe which in wrath he ſpoke;

From

From hoſtile hands his captive fair to gain,
From fate to ſave her, or the ſervile chain:
But pride, and ſhame, the fond deſign ſuppreſt;
Silent he ſtood, and lock'd it in his breaſt.

BUT now the wary Theban had divin'd,
By ſymptoms ſure, each motion of his mind:
With joy he ſaw the heat of rage ſuppreſs'd;
And thus again his artful words addreſs'd:
Illuſtrious prince! with patience bend thine ear,
And what I now ſhall offer, deign to hear.
Of all the griefs, diſtreſsful mortals prove,
The woes of friendſhip moſt my pity move.
You much I pity, and the youth regret,
Whom you too rigidly reſign to fate;
Expos'd, alone, no friend to ſuccour near,
The ſcorn and cruelty of foes to bear.
O that my timely counſel might avail,
For love, and ſympathy, to turn the ſcale!
That Thebes releas'd from thy devouring ſword,
The captive honor'd, and with gifts reſtor'd;

We

We yet might dare to hope, and you again
Enjoy the pleaſures of your native reign.

INSINUATING thus, the herald try'd
His aim to compaſs; and the chief reply'd:
In vain you ſtrive to ſway my conſtant mind;
I'll not depart while Theſeus ſtays behind:
Me nothing e'er, to change my faith, ſhall move,
By men atteſted, and the gods above:
But ſince your lawleſs tyrant has detain'd
A valu'd hoſtage, treacherouſly gain'd;
And dire injuſtice only will reſtore
When force compels, or proffer'd gifts implore:
A truce I grant, till the revolving ſun,
Twice ten full circuits of his journey run,
From the red ocean, points the morning ray,
And on the ſteps of darkneſs pours the day:
Till then, from fight and council I abſtain,
Nor lead my pow'rs to combat on the plain:
For this, your monarch to my tent ſhall ſend
The captive, and from injuries defend.

This

This proffer is my laſt; in vain will prove
All your attempts my fixed mind to move:
If Thebes accepts it, let a ſign declare,
A flaming torch, diſplay'd aloft in air,
From that high tow'r, whoſe airy top is known
By trav'lers from afar, and marks the town;
The fane of JOVE: but if they ſhall reject
The terms I ſend, nor equity reſpect;
They ſoon ſhall feel the fury of mine ire,
In waſteful havoc, and the rage of fire.

THE hero thus; and round his ſhoulders flung
A ſhaggy cloak, with vulgar trappings hung;
And on his head a leathern helmet plac'd,
A boar's rough front with griſly terrors grac'd;
A ſpear he next aſſum'd, and pond'rous ſhield,
And led the Theban, iſſuing to the field.
Amidſt ſurrounding guards they paſs'd unſeen,
For night had ſtretch'd her friendly ſhade between;
Till nearer, thro' the gloom, the gate they knew;
The herald enter'd, and the chief withdrew:

But turning oft on Thebes his eager eyes,
The ſignal, on the tow'r, at laſt he ſpies;
A flaming torch, upon the top, expos'd,
Its ray at once his troubled mind compos'd:
Such joy he felt, as when a watch tower's light,
Seen thro' the gloom of ſome tempeſtuous night,
Glads the wet mariner, a ſtar to guide
His lab'ring veſſel, thro' the ſtormy tide.

THE

THE

EPIGONIAD.

BOOK VII.

NOW ſilent night the middle ſpace poſſeſt
Of heav'n, or journey'd downwards to the
weſt :
But Creon, ſtill with thirſt of vengeance fir'd,
Repoſe declin'd, nor from his toils reſpir'd;
But held his peers in council to debate
Plans for revenge ſuggeſted by his hate.
Before the king Dienices appear'd;
To ſpeak his tidings ſad, the hero fear'd;
Return'd from Oeta; thither ſent to call
Alcides to protect his native wall.

AND

AND Creon thus: Dienices! explain
Your ſorrow; are our hopes of aid in vain?
Does Hercules neglect his native ſoil;
While ſtrangers reap the harveſt of his toil?
We from your ſilence cannot hope ſucceſs;
But further ills your flowing tears confeſs:
Cleon my ſon is dead; his fate you mourn;
I muſt not hope to ſee his ſafe return.
Sure, if he liv'd, he had not come the laſt;
But found his father with a filial haſte.
His fate, whate'er it is, reveal; nor fear,
With any tale of woe, to wound mine ear,
Proof to misfortune: for the man, who knows,
Like me, diſaſters and a length of woes,
Can ſtand unmov'd tho' loads of ſorrow preſs;
Practis'd to bear, familiar with diſtreſs.

THE monarch thus inquir'd; and thus the youth:
Too well thy boding fear has found the truth.
Cleon is dead; the hero's aſhes lie
Where Pelion's lofty head aſcends the ſky.

For

For as, on Oeta's top, he vainly ſtrove
To win the arrows of the ſon of Jove;
Compelling Philoctetes, to reſign,
The friend of Hercules, his arms divine;
The inſult to repel, an arrow flew,
And from his heart the vital current drew:
Proſtrate he ſunk; and welling from the wound,
A flood of gore impurpled all the ground.

Thus ſpoke Dienices. The king ſuppreſt
His big diſtreſs, and lock'd it in his breaſt:
Sighing he thus reply'd: The cauſe declare,
Which holds the great Alcides from the war;
And why another now, the bow commands
And arrows ſacred, from his mighty hands.
Nor fear my valiant ſon's untimely fate,
With all its weight of ſorrow, to relate:
All I can bear. Againſt my naked head,
I ſee the vengeance of the gods decreed;
With hoſtile arms beſet my tott'ring reign;
The people waſted, and my children ſlain.

Attempts prove fruitleſs; ev'ry hope deceives;
And, for the joy it promis'd, ſorrow gives.
In ſwift approach, I ſee deſtruction come;
But with a mind unmov'd, I'll meet my doom;
Nor ſtain this war-worn viſage with a tear,
Since all that heav'n has purpos'd, I can bear.
The monarch thus his riſing grief ſuppreſs'd;
And thus the peers Dienices addreſs'd:

PRINCES of Thebes! and thou, whoſe ſov'reign hand
Sways the dread ſceptre of ſupreme command!
To what I offer, lend an equal ear;
The truth I'll ſpeak, and judge me when you hear.
If Cleon, by my fault, no more returns,
For whom, her ſecond hope, his country mourns;
No doom I deprecate, no torture fly,
Which juſtice can denounce, or rage apply:
But if my innocence appears, I claim
Your cenſure to eſcape, and public blame.

FROM Marathon by night our courſe we ſteer'd,
And paſs'd Geraſtus when the day appear'd;

Andros

Andros we ſaw, with promontories ſteep,
Aſcend; and Delos level with the deep.
A circuit wide; for where Euripus roars
Between Eubœa and the Theban ſhores,
The Argives had diſpos'd their naval train;
And prudence taught to ſhun the hoſtile plain.
Four days we ſail'd; the fifth our voyage ends,
Where Oeta, ſloping to the ſea, deſcends.
The vales I ſearch'd, and woody heights above,
Guided by fame, to find the ſon of JOVE;
With Cleon only: for we charg'd the band
To ſtay, and guard our veſſel on the ſtrand.
In vain we ſearch'd; but when the lamp of day
Approach'd the ocean with its ſetting ray,
A cave appear'd, which from a mountain ſteep,
Thro' a low valley, look'd into the deep.
Thither we turn'd our weary ſteps, and found
The cavern hung with ſavage ſpoils around;
The wolf's grey fur, the wild boar's ſhaggy hide,
The lion's mane, the panther's ſpeckled pride:
Theſe ſigns we mark'd, and knew the rocky ſeat,
Some ſolitary hunter's wild retreat.

Farther

Farther invited by a glimm'ring ray,
Which thro' the darkneſs ſhed uncertain day,
In the receſſes of the cave we found
The club of Hercules; and wrapt around
Which, ſeen before, we knew, the lion's ſpoils,
The mantle which he wore in all his toils.
Amaz'd we ſtood; in ſilence, each his mind
To fear and hope alternately reſign'd:
With joy we hop'd to find the hero near;
The club and mantle found, diſpos'd to fear.
His force invincible in fight we knew,
Which nought of mortal kind could e'er ſubdue,
But fear'd Apollo's might, or his who heaves
The ſolid earth, and rules the ſtormy waves.

Pond'ring we ſtood; when on the roof above,
The tread of feet deſcending thro' the grove
Which crown'd the hollow cliff, amaz'd we heard;
And ſtraight before the cave a youth appear'd.
A bleeding buck acroſs his ſhoulders flung,
Ty'd with a rope of twiſted ruſhes, hung.
Preſs'd by the weight upon a bow he lean'd,
Of ſize unuſual, which his ſteps ſuſtain'd.

He

He dropt his burden in the gate, and plac'd,
Againſt the pillar'd cliff, his bow unbrac'd.
'Twas then our footſteps in the cave he heard,
And thro' the gloom our ſhining arms appear'd.
His bow he bent; and backwards from the rock
Retir'd, and, of our purpoſe queſt'ning, ſpoke:
Say who you are, who ſeek this wild abode,
Thro' deſart paths, by mortals rarely trod?
If juſt, and with a fair intent you come,
Friendſhip expect, and ſafety in my dome:
But if for violence; your danger learn,
And truſt my admonition when I warn:
Certain as fate, where'er this arrow flies,
The hapleſs wretch, who meets its fury, dies:
No buckler to reſiſt its point avails,
The hammer'd cuiraſs yields, the breaſt-plate fails;
And where it once has drawn the purple gore,
No charm can cure, no med'cine health reſtore.

With threats he queſtion'd thus; and Cleon ſaid,
We come to call Alcides to our aid;
By us the ſenators of Thebes entreat
The hero, to protect his native ſtate:

For hoſtile arms inveſt the Theban tow'rs;
Famine within, without the ſword, devours.
If you have learn'd where Hercules remains,
In mountain caves, or hamlets on the plains,
Our way direct; for, led by gen'ral fame,
To find him in theſe deſart wilds we came.

He ſpoke; and Philoctetes thus again:
May Jove, for Thebes, ſome other aid ordain;
For Hercules no more exerts his might,
Againſt oppreſſive force, for injur'd right:
Retir'd, among the gods, he ſits ſerene,
And views, beneath him far, this mortal ſcene:
But enter now this grotto, and partake
What I can offer, for the hero's ſake:
With you from ſacred Thebes he claim'd his birth,
For god-like virtue fam'd thro' all the earth;
And me to virtue's ſacred paths inclin'd,
Taught by his deeds, and honor'd as his friend.
Enter; for now the doubtful twilight fails;
And o'er the ſilent earth the night prevails:
From the moiſt valleys noxious fogs ariſe,
To wrap the rocky heights, and ſhade the ſkies.

The cave we enter'd, and his bounty ſhar'd;
A rural banquet by himſelf prepar'd.
But ſoon the rage of thirſt and hunger ſtay'd,
My mind ſtill doubtful, to the youth I ſaid:
Muſt hapleſs Thebes, deſpairing and undone,
Want the aſſiſtance of her braveſt ſon?
The hero's fate explain, nor grudge mine ear
The ſad aſſurance of our loſs to hear.
I queſtion'd thus. The youth, with horror pale,
Attempted to recite an awful tale;
Above the fabled woes which bards rehearſe,
When ſad Melpomene inſpires the verſe.

The wife of Jove (Pœonides reply'd)
All arts in vain to cruſh the hero try'd;
For brighter from her hate his virtue burn'd;
And diſappointed ſtill, the Goddeſs mourn'd.
His ruin to effect at laſt ſhe ſtrove
By jealouſy, the rage of injur'd love.
The bane to Deianira's breaſt convey'd,
Who, as a rival, fear'd th' Oechalian maid.

The

The Goddeſs knew, that jealous of her lord,
A robe ſhe kept with latent poiſons ſtor'd;
The centaur's gift, bequeath'd her, to reclaim
The hero's love, and light his dying flame;
If e'er, devoted to a ſtranger's charms,
He ſtray'd, unconſtant to her widow'd arms;
But giv'n with treacherous intent to prove
The death of nature, not the life of love.
Mad from her jealouſy, the charm ſhe try'd;
His love to change, the deadly robe apply'd:
And, guiltleſs of the preſent which he bore,
Lychas convey'd it to the Cœnian ſhore.
For there to all the gods the hero paid
An hundred victims, for their friendly aid:
When favor'd from above, his arm o'erthrew
The proud Eurytus, and his warriors flew.
The venom'd robe the hero took, nor fear'd
A gift by conjugal reſpects endear'd:
And ſtraight reſign'd the lion's ſhaggy ſpoils,
The mantle which he wore in all his toils.
No ſign of harm the fatal preſent ſhow'd;
Till rous'd by heat its ſecret venom glow'd:

Straight

Straight on the fleſh it ſeiz'd, like ſtiffeſt glue,
And ſcorching deep, to ev'ry member grew.
Then tearing with his hands th' infernal ſnare,
His ſkin he rent, and laid the muſcles bare;
While ſtreams of blood, deſcending from the wound,
Mix'd with the gore of victims on the ground.
The guiltleſs Lychas, in his furious mood,
He ſeiz'd, as trembling by his ſide he ſtood:
Him, by the ſlender ancle ſnatch'd, he ſwung;
And 'gainſt a rocky promontory flung:
Which, from the dire event, his name retains;
Thro' his white locks impurpled ruſh'd the brains.
Aw'd by the deed, his deſp'rate rage to ſhun,
Our bold companions from his preſence run:
I too, conceal'd behind a rock, remain'd;
My love and ſympathy by fear reſtrain'd:
For furious 'midſt the ſacred fires he flew;
The victims ſcatter'd, and the hearths o'erthrew.
Then ſinking proſtrate, where a tide of gore
From oxen ſlain had blacken'd all the ſhore,
His form divine he roll'd in duſt and blood;
His groans the hills re-echo'd and the flood.

Then

Then rising furious, to the ocean's streams
He rush'd, in hope to quench his raging flames;
But burning still the unextinguish'd pain,
The shore he left, and stretch'd into the main.
A galley, on the Cœnian beach we found;
Her furled canvass to the breeze unbound;
And trac'd his desp'rate course, till far before
We saw him land on Oeta's desart shore.
Towards the skies his furious hands he rear'd,
And thus, across the deep, his voice we heard:

Sov'reign of heav'n and earth! whose boundless sway
The fates of men and mortal things obey!
If e'er delighted from the courts above,
In human form, you sought Alcmena's love;
If fame's unchanging voice to all the earth,
With truth, proclaims you author of my birth;
Whence, from a course of spotless glory run,
Successful toils and wreaths of triumph won,
Am I thus wretched? better, that before
Some monster fierce had drunk my streaming gore;

Or

Or crush'd by Cacus, foe to gods and men,
My batter'd brains had strew'd his rocky den:
Than, from my glorious toils and triumphs past,
To fall subdu'd by female arts, at last.
O cool my boiling blood, ye winds, that blow
From mountains loaded with eternal snow,
And crack the icy cliffs: in vain! in vain!
Your rigor cannot quench my raging pain!
For round this heart the furies wave their brands,
And wring my entrails with their burning hands.
Now bending from the skies, O wife of JOVE!
Enjoy the vengeance of thy injur'd love:
For fate, by me, the Thund'rer's guilt atones;
And, punish'd in her son, Alcmena groans:
The object of your hate shall soon expire;
Fix'd on my shoulders preys a net of fire:
Whom nor the toils nor dangers could subdue,
By false Eurystheus dictated from you;
Nor tyrants lawless, nor the monstrous brood,
Which haunts the desart or infests the flood,
Nor Greece, nor all the barb'rous climes that lie
Where Phœbus ever points his golden eye;

A

A woman hath o'erthrown! ye gods! I yield
To female arts, unconquer'd in the field.
My arms—alas! are these the same that bow'd
Anteus, and his giant force subdu'd?
That drag'd Nemea's monster from his den;
And dy'd, with dragon's gore, the Lernean fen?
Alas, alas! their mighty muscles fail,
While pains infernal ev'ry nerve assail:
Alas, alas! I feel in streams of woe
These eyes dissolv'd, before untaught to flow.
Awake my virtue, oft in dangers try'd,
Patient in toils, in deaths unterrify'd,
Rouse to my aid; nor let my labors past,
With fame atchiev'd, be blotted by the last:
Firm and unmov'd, the present shock endure;
Once triumph, and for ever rest secure.

The hero thus; and grasp'd a pointed rock
With both his arms, which straight in pieces broke,
Crush'd in his agony; then on his breast
Descending prostrate, further plaint suppress'd.

And

And now the clouds, in dusky volumes spread,
Had darken'd all the mountains with their shade:
The winds withhold their breath; the billows rest;
The sky's dark image on the deep imprest.
A bay for shelter, op'ning in the strand,
We saw, and steer'd our vessel to the land.
Then mounting on the rocky beach above,
Thro' the thick gloom, descry'd the son of Jove.
His head, declin'd between his hands, he lean'd;
His elbows on his bended knees sustain'd.
Above him still a hov'ring vapor flew,
Which, from his boiling veins, the garment drew.
Thro' the thick woof we saw the fumes aspire;
Like smoke of victims from the sacred fire.
Compassion's keenest touch my bosom thrill'd;
My eyes, a flood of melting sorrow fill'd:
Doubtful I stood; and pond'ring in my mind,
By fear, and pity, variously inclin'd,
Whether to shun the hero, or essay,
With friendly words, his torment to allay:
When bursting from above with hideous glare,
A flood of light'ning kindled all the air,

From Oeta's top it rush'd in sudden streams;
The ocean redden'd at its fiery beams.
Then, bellowing deep, the thunder's awful sound
Shook the firm mountains and the shores around.
Far to the east it roll'd, a length of sky;
We heard Eubœa's rattling cliffs reply
As at his master's voice a swain appears,
When wak'd from sleep his early call he hears,
The hero rose; and to the mountain turn'd
Whose cloud-involved top with light'ning burn'd:
And thus his sire address'd: With patient mind,
Thy call I hear, obedient and resign'd;
Faithful and true the oracle! which spoke,
In high Dodona, from the sacred oak;
" That twenty years of painful labors past,
" On Oeta's top I should repose at last:"
Before, involv'd, the meaning lay conceal'd;
But now I find it in my fate reveal'd.
Thy sov'reign will I blame not, which denies,
With length of days, to crown my victories;
Tho' still with danger and distress engag'd,
For injur'd right eternal war I wag'd;

A life of pain, in barb'rous climates, led,
The heav'n's my canopy, a rock my bed:
More joy I've felt than delicacy knows,
Or all the pride of regal pomp beſtows.
Dread ſire! thy will I honor and revere,
And own thy love with gratitude ſincere,
Which watch'd me in my toils, that none could boaſt
To raiſe a trophy from my glory loſt:
And tho' at laſt, by female arts o'ercome,
And unſuſpected fraud, I find my doom;
There to have fail'd, my honor ne'er can ſhake,
Where vice is only ſtrong and virtue weak.

He ſaid; and turning to the cloudy height,
The ſeat of thunder, wrapt in ſable night,
With ſteps undaunted trod the ſteep aſcent;
An earthquake rock'd the mountain as he went.
Back from the ſhaking ſhores retir'd the flood;
In horror loſt, my bold companions ſtood,
To ſpeech or motion: but the preſent pow'r
Of love inſpir'd me, in that awful hour;

With trembling ſteps, I trac'd the ſon of JOVE;
And ſaw him darkly on the ſteep above,
Thro' the thick gloom. The thunder's awful noiſe
Ceas'd; and I call'd him thus with feeble voice:
O ſon of mighty JOVE! thy friend await;
Who comes to comfort thee, or ſhare thy fate.
In ev'ry danger and diſtreſs before,
His part your faithful Philoctetes bore.
Suffer me ſtill to tend you; and receive
The comfort which a preſent friend can give,
Who comes obſequious for your laſt commands,
And tenders to your need his willing hands.

MY voice he heard; and from the mountain's brow
Saw me aſcending on the ſteep below.
To favor my approach his ſteps he ſtay'd;
And pleas'd, amidſt his anguiſh, ſmiling ſaid:
Approach, my Philoctetes! Oft I've known
Your friendly zeal in former labors ſhown:
The preſent, more than all, your love proclaims,
Which braves the Thund'rer's bolts and volley'd
flames;

With

With daring ſtep, the rocking earthquake treads,
While the firm mountains ſhake their trembling
heads.
As my laſt gift, theſe arrows, with the bow,
Accept; the greateſt which I can beſtow;
My glory all my wealth; of pow'r to raiſe
Your name to honor and immortal praiſe;
If for wrong'd innocence your ſhafts ſhall fly,
As JOVE by ſigns directs them from the ſky.

STRAIGHT from his mighty ſhoulders, as he ſpoke,
He loos'd and lodg'd them in a cavern'd rock;
To lie untouch'd, till future care had drain'd
Their poiſon from the venom'd robe retain'd.
And thus again: The only aid I need,
For all my favors paſt, the only meed,
Is, that, with vengeful hand, you fix a dart
In cruel Deianira's faithleſs heart:
Her treach'rous meſſenger already dead,
Let her the author of his crime ſucceed.
This awful ſcene forſake without delay;
In vain to mingle with my fate you ſtay:

No kind aſſiſtance can my ſtate retrieve,
Nor any friend attend me, and ſurvive.

The hero thus his tender care expreſt,
And ſpred his arms to claſp me to his breaſt;
But ſoon withdrew them, leſt his tainted veins
Infection had convey'd and raging pains:
Silent I ſtood in ſtreams of ſorrow drown'd,
Till from my heart theſe words a paſſage found:
O bid me not forſake thee, nor impoſe
What wretched Philoctetes muſt refuſe.
By him I ſwear, whoſe preſence, now proclaim
The thunder's awful voice and forked flame,
Beneath whoſe ſteps the trembling deſart quakes,
And earth affrighted to her center ſhakes;
I never will forſake thee, but remain
While ſtruggling life theſe ruin'd limbs retain:
No form of fate ſhall drive me from thy ſide,
Nor death with all its terrors e'er divide;
Tho' the ſame ſtroke our mortal lives ſhould end,
One flaſh conſume us, and our aſhes blend.

I ſpoke; and to the cloudy ſteep we turn'd;
Along its brow the kindled foreſt burn'd.
The ſavage brood, deſcending to the plains,
The ſcatter'd flocks and dread diſtracted ſwains,
Ruſh'd from the ſhaking cliffs: we ſaw them come,
In wild diſorder mingled, thro' the gloom.
And now appear'd the deſart's lofty head,
A narrow rock with foreſt thinly ſpread.
His mighty hands diſplay'd aloft in air,
To JOVE the hero thus addreſs'd a pray'r:
Hear me, dread pow'r! whoſe nod controls the ſkies,
At whoſe command the winged light'ning flies:
Almighty ſire! if yet you deign to own
Alcmena's wretched offspring as your ſon;
Some comfort in my agony impart,
And bid thy forked thunder rend this heart:
Round my devoted head it idly plays;
And aids the fire, which waſtes me, with its rays:
By heat inflam'd, this robe exerts its pow'r,
My ſcorched limbs to ſhrivel and devour;
Upon my ſhoulders, like a dragon, clings,
And fixes in my fleſh a thouſand ſtings.

Great

Great ſire! in pity to my ſuit attend,
And with a ſudden ſtroke my being end.

As thus the hero pray'd, the lightning ceas'd,
And thicker darkneſs all the hill embrac'd.
He ſaw his ſuit deny'd: in fierce deſpair,
The rooted pines he tore, and cedars fair;
And from the crannies of the rifted rocks,
Twiſted with force immenſe the ſtubborn oaks.
Of theſe upon the cliff a heap he laid,
And thus addreſs'd me, as I ſtood diſmay'd:
Behold, my friend! the ruler of the ſkies,
In agony invok'd, my ſuit denies:
But ſure the oracle inſpir'd from heaven,
Which in Dodona's ſacred grove was given,
The truth declar'd; "that now my toils ſhall ceaſe,
"And all my painful labors end in peace."
Peace, death can only bring: the raging ſmart,
Warpt with my vitals, mocks each healing art.
Not all the plants that clothe the verdant field,
Nor all the herbs a thouſand mountains yield,

Which on their tops the ſage phyſician gleans,
Or ſeeks in darkneſs thro' their ſecret veins,
This fire can quench. And therefore, to obey
My laſt commands, prepare without delay.
When on this pile you ſee my limbs compos'd,
Shrink not, but hear what muſt not be oppos'd;
Approach, and, with an unrelenting hand,
Fix, in the boughs beneath, a flaming brand.
I muſt not longer truſt this madding pain,
Leſt ſome raſh deed ſhould all my glory ſtain.
Lychas I ſlew upon the Cœnian ſhore,
Who knew not, ſure, the fatal gift he bore:
His guilt had taught him elſe to fly, nor wait,
Till from my rage he found a ſudden fate.
I will not Deianira's action blame;
Let heav'n decide, which only knows her aim:
Whether from hate, with treacherous intent,
This fatal garment to her lord ſhe ſent;
Or, by the cunning of a foe betray'd,
His vengeance, thus imprudently convey'd.
If this, or that, I urge not my command,
Nor claim her fate from thy avenging hand:

To lodge my lifeless bones, is all I crave,
Safe and uninjur'd in the peaceful grave.

This with a hollow voice and alter'd look,
In agony extreme, the hero spoke.
I pour'd a flood of sorrow, and withdrew,
Amidst the kindled groves, to pluck a bough;
With which the structure at the base I fir'd:
On ev'ry side the pointed flames aspir'd.
But ere involving smoke the pile inclos'd,
I saw the hero on the top repos'd;
Serene as one who, near the fountain laid,
At noon enjoys the cool refreshing shade.
The venom'd garment hiss'd; its touch the fires
Avoiding, slop'd oblique their pointed spires:
On ev'ry side the parted flame withdrew,
And level'd, round the burning structure, flew.
At last victorious to the top they rose;
Firm and unmov'd the hero saw them close.
His soul, unfetter'd, sought the blest abodes,
To mingle with the children of the gods.

His

His bones in earth, with pious hands, I laid;
The place to publish nothing shall persuade;
Lest tyrants, now unaw'd, and men unjust,
With insults, should profane his sacred dust.
E'er since, I haunt this solitary den,
Retir'd from all the busy paths of men;
For these wild mountains only suit my state,
And sooth, with kindred gloom, my deep regret.

He ended thus: amazement long suppress'd
My voice; but Cleon answ'ring thus address'd:
Brave youth! you offer, to our wond'ring ears,
Events more awful than tradition bears.
Fix'd in my mind the hero's fate remains,
I see his agonies, and feel his pains!
Yet suffer, that for hapless Thebes I mourn,
Whose fairest hopes the envious fates o'erturn.
If great Alcides liv'd, her tow'rs should stand
Safe and protected by his mighty hand:
On you, brave youth! our second hopes depend;
To you the arms of Hercules descend.

He did not, sure, those glorious gifts bestow,
The shafts invincible, the mighty bow;
From which the innocent protection claim,
To dye the hills with blood of savage game.
Such toils as these your glory ne'er can raise,
Nor crown your merit with immortal praise;
And with the great Alcides, place your name,
To stand distinguish'd in the rolls of fame.

THE hero thus. The son of Pean said:
Myself, my arms, I offer for your aid;
If fav'ring from the skies, the signs of JOVE
Confirm what thus I purpose and approve.
For when Alcides, with his last commands,
His bow and shafts committed to my hands;
Success he promis'd only, if I fought,
As JOVE before by auguries had taught.
But these the rising sun will best disclose;
The season now invites to soft repose.

HE said; and, from the hearth a flaming bough,
To light us thro' the shady cavern, drew.

Far

Far in the dark receſs, a rocky bed
We found, with ſkins of mountain monſters, ſpread.
There we compos'd our weary limbs, and lay,
Till darkneſs fled before the morning ray.
Then roſe, and climb'd a promontory ſteep,
Whoſe rocky brow, impending o'er the deep,
Shoots high into the air, and lifts the eye,
In boundleſs ſtretch, to take a length of ſky.
With hands extended to th' ethereal height,
The pow'r we call'd, who rules the realms of light;
That ſymbols ſure his purpoſe might explain,
Whether the youth ſhould aid us, or refrain:
We pray'd; and on the left along the vales,
With pinions broad diſplay'd, an eagle ſails.
As near the ground his level flight he drew,
He ſtoop'd, and bruſh'd the thickets as he flew;
When, ſtarting from the center of a brake,
With horrid hiſs appear'd a creſted ſnake:
Her young to guard, her venom'd fangs ſhe rear'd;
Above the ſhrubs her wavy length appear'd;
Againſt his ſwift approaches, as he flew,
On ev'ry ſide her forked tongue ſhe threw,

And

And armed jaws; but wheeling from the snare
The swift assailant still escap'd in air;
Till rushing with his pounces sharp, he tore
Her purple crest, and drew a stream of gore.
She wreath'd; and, in the fierceness of her pain,
Shook the long thickets with her twisted train:
Relax'd at last, its spires forgot to roll,
And, in a hiss, she breath'd her fiery soul:
Then, stooping from above, the bird of JOVE
Down to the bottom of the thicket drove;
The young defenceless from the covert drew;
Devour'd them straight, and to the mountains flew.
This omen seen, another worse we hear;
The subterraneous thunder greets our ear:
The worst of all the signs which augurs know;
A dire prognostic of impending woe.

AMAZ'D we stood, till Philoctetes broke
Our long dejected silence thus, and spoke:
Warriors of Thebes! the auguries dissuade
My purpose, and withhold me from your aid;

Tho'

Tho' pity moves me, and ambition draws,
To share your labors and assert your cause;
In fight the arms of Hercules to show,
And from his native ramparts drive the foe.
But vain it is against the gods to strive;
Whose counsels ruin nations or retrieve;
Without their favor, valor nought avails,
And human prudence self-subverted fails;
For irresistibly their councils guide
All human things, and good and ill divide.
Let all your princes at the altars wait,
And long processions crowd each sacred gate:
With sacrifice appeas'd, and humble pray'r,
Their omens frustrated, the gods may spare.
To day my guests repose; to morrow sail,
If heav'n propitious sends a prosp'rous gale:
For, threat'ning sudden storms, the southern breeze
Forbids you now to trust the faithless seas.

The hero thus; in silence sad, we mourn'd;
And to the solitary cave return'd,

Despairing

Despairing of success; our grief he shar'd,
And for relief a chearing bowl prepar'd;
The vintage, which the grape spontaneous yields,
By art untutor'd, on the woodland fields,
He sought; with care, and mingled in the bowl,
A plant, of pow'r to calm the troubled soul;
Its name Nepenthe; swains, on desart ground,
Do often glean it, else but rarely found;
This in the bowl he mix'd; and soon we found,
In soft oblivion, all our sorrows drown'd:
We felt no more the agonies of care,
And hope, succeeding, dawn'd upon despair.
From morn we feasted, till the setting ray
Retir'd, and ev'ning shades expel'd the day;
Then in the dark recesses of the cave,
To slumbers soft, our willing limbs we gave:
But ere the morning, from the east, appear'd,
And sooner than the early lark is heard,
Cleon awak'd, my careless slumber broke,
And bending to my ear, in whispers spoke:
Dienices! while here we rest secure,
We think not what our citizens endure.

The

The worſt the ſigns have threat'ned, nought appears
With happier aſpect to diſpel our fears;
Alcides lives not, and his friend in vain
To arms we call, while auguries reſtrain:
Returning thus, we bring the Theban ſtate
But hopes deceiv'd, and omens of her fate:
Better ſucceſs our labors ſhall attend,
Nor all our aims in diſappointment end;
If you approve my purpoſe, nor diſſuade
What now I counſel for your country's aid.
Soon as the ſun diſplays his early beam,
The arms of great Alcides let us claim;
Then for Bœotia's ſhores direct our ſails;
And force muſt ſecond if perſuaſion fails:
Againſt reproach neceſſity ſhall plead;
And all, who hear it, juſtify the deed.

THE hero thus, and ceas'd: with pity mov'd,
And zeal for Thebes, I raſhly thus approv'd.
You counſel well; but prudence would adviſe
To work by cunning rather, and ſurprize;

Than force declar'd; his venom'd ſhafts you know,
Which fly reſiſtleſs from th' Herculean bow;
A ſafe occaſion now the ſilent hour
Of midnight yields; when, by the gentle pow'r
Of careleſs ſlumber bound, the hero lies,
Our neceſſary fraud ſhall ſcape his eyes;
Without the aid of force obtain its aim,
With danger leſs incur'd, and leſs of blame.

I counſel'd thus; and Cleon ſtraight approv'd.
In ſilence from the dark receſs we mov'd;
Towards the hearth, with wary ſteps, we came,
The aſhes ſtir'd, and rous'd the ſlumb'ring flame.
On ev'ry ſide in vain we turn'd our eyes,
Nor, as our hopes had promis'd, found the prize:
Till to the couch, where Philoctetes lay,
The quiver led us by its ſilver ray;
For in a panther's furr together ty'd,
His bow and ſhafts, the pillow's place ſupply'd:
Thither I went with careful ſteps and ſlow;
And by degrees obtain'd th' Herculean bow:

The

The quiver next to diſengage eſſay'd;
It ſtuck intangled, but at laſt obey'd.
The prize obtain'd, we haſten to the ſtrand,
And rouſe the mariners, and ſtraight command
The canvaſs to unfurl: a gentle gale
Favor'd our courſe, and breath'd on ev'ry ſail;
The ſhores retir'd; and when the morning ray
Aſcended, from the deep, th' ethereal way;
Upon the right the Cœnian beach appear'd,
And Pelion on the left his ſummit rear'd.
All day we ſail'd; but when the ſetting light
Approach'd the ocean, from th' Olympian height,
The breeze was huſh'd; and, ſtretch'd acroſs the main,
Like mountains riſing on the wat'ry plain,
The clouds collected on the billows ſtood,
And, with incumbent ſhade, obſcur'd the flood.
Thither a current bore us; ſoon we found
A night of vapor cloſing faſt around.
Looſe hung the empty ſail: we ply'd our oars,
And ſtrove to reach Eubœa's friendly ſhores;

But

But ſtrove in vain: for erring from the courſe,
In mazes wide, the rower ſpent his force.
Seven days and nights we try'd ſome port to gain,
Where Greek or barb'rous ſhores exclude the main;
But knew not, whether backwards, or before,
Or on the right, or left, to ſeek the ſhore:
Till, riſing on the eighth, a gentle breeze
Drove the light fog, and bruſh'd the curling ſeas.
Our canvaſs to its influence we ſpread;
And fix'd our oars, and follow'd as it led.
Before us ſoon, impending from above,
Thro' parting clouds, we ſaw a lofty grove.
Alarm'd, the ſail we ſlacken, and explore
The deeps and ſhallows of the unknown ſhore.
Near on the right a winding creek appear'd,
Thither, directed by the pole, we ſteer'd;
And landed on the beach, by fate miſled,
Nor knew again the port from which we fled.
The gods themſelves deceiv'd us: to our eyes
New caverns open, airy cliffs ariſe;
That Philoctetes might again poſſeſs
His arms, and heav'n our injury redreſs.

THE unknown region purpos'd to explore,
Cleon, with me alone, forſakes the ſhore;
Back to the cave we left, by angry fate
Implicitly conducted, at the gate
The injur'd youth we found; a thick diſguiſe
His native form conceal'd, and mock'd our eyes;
For the black locks in waving ringlets ſpread,
A wreath of hoary white involv'd his head;
Beneath a load of years, he ſeem'd to bend,
His breaſt to ſink, his ſhoulders to aſcend.
He ſaw us ſtraight, and, riſing from his ſeat,
Began with ſharp reproaches to repeat
Our crime; but could not thus ſuſpicion give;
So ſtrong is error when the gods deceive!
We queſtion'd of the country as we came,
By whom inhabited, and what its name;
How far from Thebes: that thither we were bound;
And thus the wary youth our error found.
Smooth'd to deceive, his accent ſtraight he turn'd,
While in his breaſt the thirſt of vengeance burn'd;
And hoping now his arrows to poſſeſs,
Thus to our queſtion ſpoke, with prompt addreſs:

On

On Ida's ſacred height, my gueſts! you ſtand;
Here Priam rules, in peace, a happy land.
Twelve cities own him, on the Phrygian plain,
Their lord, and twelve fair iſlands on the main.
From hence to Thebes in ſeven days ſpace you'll ſail,
If JOVE propitious ſends a proſp'rous gale.
But now accept a homely meal, and deign
To ſhare, what heav'n affords a humble ſwain.

HE ſaid; and brought a bowl with vintage fill'd,
From berries wild, and mountain grapes diſtill'd,
Of largeſt ſize; and plac'd it on a rock,
Under the covert of a ſpreading oak;
Around it autumn's mellow ſtores he laid,
Which the ſun ripens, in the woodland ſhade.
Our thirſt and hunger thus at once allay'd,
To Cleon turning, Philoctetes ſaid:
The bow you wear of ſuch ſuperior ſize,
With wonder ſtill I view and curious eyes;
For length, for thickneſs, and the workman's art,
Surpaſſing all I've ſeen in ev'ry part.

Dissembling, thus inquir'd the wary youth,
And thus your valiant ſon declar'd the truth:
Father! the weapon, which you thus commend,
The force of great Alcides once did bend;
Theſe ſhafts the ſame which monſters fierce ſubdu'd,
And lawleſs men with vengeance juſt purſu'd.

The hero thus; and Pœan's ſon again:
What now I aſk, refuſe not to explain:
Whether the hero ſtill exerts his might,
For innocence oppreſs'd, and injur'd right?
Or yields to fate; and with the mighty dead,
From toil repoſes in the Elyſian ſhade!
Sure, if he liv'd, he would not thus forgoe
His ſhafts invincible and mighty bow,
By which, he oft immortal honor gain'd
For wrongs redreſs'd and lawleſs force reſtrain'd.

The rage ſuppreſs'd, which in his boſom burn'd,
He queſtion'd thus; and Cleon thus return'd:
What we have heard of Hercules, I'll ſhow;
What by report we learn'd, and what we know.

From

From Thebes to Oeta's wilderness we went,
With supplications to the hero sent
From all our princes; that he would exert
His matchless valor on his country's part,
Against whose state united foes conspire,
And waste her wide domain with sword and fire.
There on the cliffs, which bound the neighb'ring main,
We found the mansion of a lonely swain,
Much like to this; but that its rocky mouth
The cooling north respects, as this the south;
And, in a corner of the cave, conceal'd,
The club which great Alcides us'd to wield,
Wrapt in his shaggy robe, the lion's spoils,
The mantle which he wore in all his toils.
At ev'n a hunter in the cave appear'd,
From whom the fate of Hercules we heard.
He told us that he saw the chief expire,
That he himself did light his fun'ral fire;
And boasted, that the hero had resign'd,
To him, the bow and quiver, as his friend:
Oft seen before, these deadly shafts we know,
And tip'd with stars of gold th' Herculean bow:

But

But of the hero's fate, the tale he told,
Whether 'tis true, I cannot now unfold.

He ſpoke. The youth with indignation burn'd,
Yet calm in outward ſemblance, thus return'd:
I muſt admire the man who could reſign
To you, theſe arms ſo precious and divine,
Which, to the love of ſuch a friend, he ow'd:
Great was the gift if willingly beſtow'd:
By force they could not eaſily be gain'd,
And fraud, I know, your gen'rous ſouls diſdain'd.
Severely ſmiling, thus the hero ſpoke;
With conſcious ſhame we heard, nor ſilence broke:
And thus again: The only boon I claim,
Which, to your hoſt deny'd, would merit blame;
Is, that my hands that weapon may embrace,
And on the flaxen cord an arrow place;
An honor which I covet; tho' we mourn'd,
By great Alcides, once our ſtate o'erturn'd:
When proud Laomedon the hero brav'd,
Nor paid the ranſom for his daughter ſav'd.

DISSEMBLING thus, did Philoctetes strive
His instruments of vengeance to retrieve:
And, by the fates deceiv'd, in evil hour,
The bow and shafts we yielded to his pow'r,
In mirthful mood, provoking him to try
Whether the weapon would his force obey;
For weak he seem'd, like one whose nerves had lost
Thro' age, the vigor which in youth they boast.
The belt around his shoulders first he flung,
And glitt'ring by his side the quiver hung:
Compress'd with all his force the stubborn yew
He bent, and from the case an arrow drew:
And yielding to his rage, in furious mood,
With aim direct against us full he stood,
For vengeance arm'd; and now the thick disguise,
Which veil'd his form before, and mock'd our eyes,
Vanish'd in air; our error then appear'd;
I saw the vengeance of the gods, and fear'd;
Before him to the ground my knees I bow'd,
And, with extended hands, for mercy su'd.
But Cleon, fierce and scorning to intreat,
His weapon drew, and rush'd upon his fate:

For,

For as he came, the fatal arrow ſent,
Straight to his dauntleſs breaſt unerring went;
Supine he fell; and, welling from the wound,
A tide of gore impurpled all the ground.
The ſon of Pæan ſtooping drew the dart,
Yet warm with ſlaughter, from the hero's heart;
And turn'd it full on me: with humble pray'r
And lifted hands, I mov'd him ſtill to ſpare.
At laſt he yielded, from his purpoſe ſway'd,
And anſw'ring thus in milder accents, ſaid:
No favor, ſure, you merit; and the cauſe,
Of right infring'd and hoſpitable laws,
Would juſtify revenge; but as you claim,
With Hercules, your native ſoil the ſame;
I now ſhall pardon for the hero's ſake,
Nor, tho' the means are offer'd, vengeance take.
But ſtraight avoid my preſence, and unbind,
With ſpeed, your flying canvaſs to the wind:
For if again to meet theſe eyes you come,
No pray'rs ſhall change, or mitigate your doom.

WITH

WITH frowning aspect thus the hero said.
His threats I fear'd, and willingly obey'd.
Straight in his purple robe the dead I bound,
Then rais'd him to my shoulders from the ground;
And from the hills descending to the bay,
Where anchor'd near the beach our galley lay,
The rest convey'd, with sorrow to relate
This anger of the gods and Cleon's fate.
The hero's fate his bold companions mourn'd,
And ev'ry breast with keen resentment burn'd:
They in their heady transport straight decreed,
His fall with vengeance to requite or bleed:
I fear'd the angry gods; and gave command,
With sail and oar, to fly the fatal strand.
Inrag'd and sad, the mariners obey'd,
Unfurl'd the canvass, and the anchor weigh'd.
Our course, behind the western breezes sped,
And from the coast with heavy hearts we fled.
All day they favor'd; but, with ev'ning, ceas'd;
And straight a tempest, from the stormy east,
In opposition full, began to blow,
And rear in ridges high the deep below.

Against

Against its boist'rous sway in vain we strove;
Obliquely to the Thracian coast we drove,
Where Pelion lifts his head aloft in air,
With pointed cliffs and precipices bare;
Thither our course we steer'd, and on the strand
Descending, fix'd our cable to the land.
There twenty days we stay'd, and wish'd, in vain,
A favorable breeze, to cross the main;
For with unceasing rage the tempest rav'd,
And o'er the rocky beach the ocean heav'd.
At last with care the hero's limbs we burn'd,
And, water'd with our tears, his bones inurn'd.
There, where a promontory's height divides,
Extended in the deep, the parted tides,
His tomb is seen, which, from its airy stand,
Marks to the mariner the distant land.

This, princess! is the truth; and tho' the will
Of heav'n, the sov'reign cause of good and ill,
Has dash'd our hopes, and, for the good in view,
With griefs afflicts us and disasters new.

Yet

Yet, innocent of all, I justly claim
To stand exempt from punishment, or blame,
That zeal for Thebes 'gainst hospitable laws
Prevail'd, and ardor in my country's cause,
I freely have confess'd; but sure, if wrong
Was e'er permitted to inducement strong,
This claims to be excus'd: our country's need,
With all who hear it, will for favor plead.

He ended thus. Unable to subdue
His grief, the monarch from the throne withdrew:
In silent wonder fix'd, the rest remain'd;
Till Clytophon the gen'ral sense explain'd:
Your just defence, we mean not to refuse;
Your prudence censure, or your zeal accuse:
To heav'n we owe the valiant Cleon's fate,
With each disaster which afflicts the state.
Soon as the sun forsakes the eastern main,
At ev'ry altar let a bull be slain;
And Thebes assembled move the pow'rs to spare,
With vows of sacrifice and humble pray'r:

But

But now the night invites to soft repose,
The momentary cure of human woes;
The stars descend, and soon the morning ray
Shall rouse us to the labors of the day.
The hero thus; In silence all approv'd,
And rising, various, from th' assembly mov'd.

THE

THE EPIGONIAD.

BOOK VIII.

BEHIND the palace, where a ſtream deſcends,
Its lonely walks a ſhady grove extends;
Once ſacred, now for common uſe ordain'd,
By war's wide licence and the ax profan'd:
Thither the monarch, from th' aſſembly, went
Alone, his fury and deſpair to vent,
And thus to heav'n: Dread Pow'r! whoſe ſov'reign ſway
The fates of men and mortal things obey!
From me expect not ſuch applauſe to hear,
As fawning vot'ries to thine altars bear;
But truth ſevere. Altho' the forked brand,
Which for deſtruction arms thy mighty hand,

Were level'd at my head; a mind I hold,
By preſent ills, or future, uncontrol'd.
Beneath thy ſway, the race of mortals groan;
Felicity ſincere is felt by none:
Deluſive hope th' unpractis'd mind aſſails,
And, by ten thouſand treach'rous arts, prevails:
Thro' all the earth the fair deceiver ſtrays,
And wretched man to miſery betrays.
Our crimes you puniſh, never teach to ſhun,
When, blind from folly, on our fate we run:
Hence ſighs and groans thy tyrant reign confeſs,
With ev'ry rueful ſymptom of diſtreſs.
Here war unchain'd exerts his waſteful pow'r;
Here famine pines; diſeaſes there devour,
And lead a train of all the ills that know
To ſhorten life, or lengthen it in woe.
All men are curſt; but I, above the reſt,
With tenfold vengeance, for my crimes, oppreſt;
With hoſtile pow'rs beſet my tott'ring reign,
The people waſted, and my children ſlain;
In ſwift approach, I ſee deſtruction come,
But, with a mind unmov'd, I'll meet my doom;

For

For know ſtern Pow'r! whoſe vengeance has decreed
That Creon, after all his ſons, ſhould bleed;
As from the ſummit of ſome deſart rock,
The ſport of tempeſts, falls the leafleſs oak,
Of all its honors ſtript, thou ne'er ſhalt find,
Weakly ſubmiſs, or ſtupidly reſign'd
This dauntleſs heart; but purpos'd to debate
Thy ſtern decrees, and burſt the chains of fate.

He ſaid; and turning where the heralds ſtand
All night by turns, and wait their lord's command;
Meneſtheus there and Hegeſander found,
And Phæmius ſage for valor once renown'd;
He charg'd them thus: Beyond the eaſtern tow'rs,
Summon to meet in arms our martial pow'rs.
In ſilence let them move; let ſigns command,
And mute obedience reign thro' ev'ry band;
For, when the eaſt, with early twilight, glows,
We ruſh, from cover'd ambuſh, on our foes
Secure and unprepar'd: the truce we ſwore,
Our plighted faith, the ſeal of wine, and gore,

No

No ties I hold; all piety disclaim:
Adverse to me the gods, and I to them.
The angry monarch thus his will declar'd;
His rage the heralds fear'd, and straight repair'd
To rouse the warriors. Now the morning light
Begins to mingle with the shades of night:
In ev'ry street a glitt'ring stream appears,
Of polish'd helmets mix'd with shining spears:
Towards the eastern gate they drive along,
Nations and tribes, an undistinguish'd throng;
Creon himself superior, in his car,
Receiv'd them coming, and dispos'd the war.

And now the Argives from their tents proceed,
With rites sepulchral, to intomb the dead.
The king of men, amidst the fun'ral fires,
The chiefs assembles, and the work inspires,
And thus the Pylian sage, in counsel wise:
Princes! I view, with wonder and surprize,
Yon field abandon'd, where the foe pursu'd
Their fun'ral rites before, with toil renew'd:

Not

Not half their dead interr'd, they now abstain,
And silence reigns thro' all the smoaky plain:
Thence jealousy and fear possess my mind
Of faith infring'd, and treachery design'd:
Behind those woody heights, behind these tow'rs,
I dread, in ambush laid, the Theban pow'rs;
With purpose to assault us, when they know
That we confiding least expect a foe:
Let half the warriors arm, and stand prepar'd,
From sudden violence, the host to guard;
While, in the mournful rites, the rest proceed,
Due to the honor'd-reliques of the dead.

THUS as he spoke; approaching from afar,
The hostile pow'rs, embattel'd for the war,
Appear'd; and streaming from their polish'd shields
A blaze of splendor bright'ned all the fields.
And thus the king of men, with lifted eyes,
And both his hands extended to the skies:
Ye Pow'rs supreme! whose unresisted sway
The fate of men and mortal things obey!

Let

Let all the plagues, which perjury attend,
At once, and ſudden, on our foes deſcend:
Let not the ſacred ſeal of wine and gore,
The hands we plighted, and the oaths we ſwore,
Be now in vain; but, from your bright abodes,
Confound the bold deſpiſers of the gods.

He pray'd; and nearer came the hoſtile train,
With ſwift approach advancing on the plain;
Embattel'd thick; as when, at fall of night,
A ſhepherd, from ſome promontory's height,
Approaching from the deep, a fog deſcries
Which hov'ring lightly o'er the billows flies;
By breezes borne, the ſolid ſoon it gains,
Climbs the ſteep hills, and darkens all the plains:
Silent and ſwift the Theban pow'rs draw near;
The chariots led, a phalanx form'd the rear.

Confusion ſtraight thro' all the hoſt aroſe,
Stir'd like the ocean when a tempeſt blows.
Some arm for fight; the reſt to terror yield,
Inactive ſtand, or trembling quit the field.

On

On ev'ry side, assaults the deaf'ned ear
The discord loud of tumult, rage and fear.
Superior in his car, with ardent eyes,
The king of men thro' all the army flies;
The rash restrains, the cold with courage fires,
And all with hope and confidence inspires;
As when the deep, in liquid mountains hurl'd,
Assaults the rocky limits of the world;
When tempests with unlicenc'd fury rave,
And sweep from shore to shore the flying wave:
If he, to whom each pow'r of ocean bends,
To quell such uproar, from the deep ascends,
Serene, amidst the wat'ry war, he rides,
And fixes, with his voice, the moving tides:
Such seem'd the monarch. From th' Olympian height,
The martial maid precipitates her flight;
To aid her fav'rite host the goddess came,
Mentor she seem'd, her radiant arms the same;
Who with Ulysses brought a chosen band
Of warriors from the Cephalenian strand;

Already arm'd the valiant youth ſhe found,
And arming for the fight his warriors round.
And thus began: Brave prince! our foes appear
For battle order'd, and the fight is near.
Dauntleſs they come ſuperior and elate,
While fear unmans us, and reſigns to fate.
Would now ſome god his preſent favor ſhow,
And for a moment ſtop th' invading foe;
Till from dejection rous'd, and ſad deſpair,
The hoſt might arm, and for the fight prepare;
Or, if on human aid we muſt depend,
Nor hope to ſee the fav'ring gods deſcend,
Great were the hero's praiſe, who now could boaſt
From ruin imminent to ſave the hoſt!
The danger near ſome prompt expedient claims,
And prudence triumphs oft in worſt extremes.

THUS, in a form aſſum'd, the martial maid;
And thus the ſon of wiſe Laertes ſaid:
In youth, I cannot hope to win the praiſe,
With which experience crowns a length of days;
Weak

Weak are the hopes that on my counſels ſtand
To combats new, nor practis'd in command:
But as the gods, to ſave a ſinking ſtate,
Or ſnatch an army from the jaws of fate,
When prudence ſtands confounded, oft ſuggeſt
A prompt expedient to ſome vulgar breaſt;
To your diſcerning ear I ſhall expoſe
What now my mind excites me to diſcloſe.
Sav'd from th' unfiniſh'd honors of the ſlain,
The mingled ſpoils of foreſts load the plain;
In heaps contiguous, round the camp they lie,
A fence too weak to ſtop the enemy:
But if we mix them with the ſeeds of fire,
Which unextinguiſh'd glow in ev'ry pyre,
Againſt the foe ſudden a wall ſhall riſe,
Of flame and ſmoke aſcending to the ſkies:
The ſteed diſmay'd ſhall backwards hurl the car;
Mix with the phalanx, and confound the war.

He ſaid. The Goddeſs, in her conſcious breaſt,
A mother's triumph for a ſon poſſeſs'd,

Who emulates his ſire in glorious deeds,
And, with his virtue, to his fame ſucceeds:
Graceful the Goddeſs turn'd, and with a voice,
Bold, and ſuperior to the vulgar noiſe,
O'er all the field commands the woods to fire;
Straight to obey a thouſand hands conſpire.
On ev'ry ſide the ſpreading flame extends,
And, roll'd in cloudy wreaths, the ſmoke aſcends.

Creon beheld; inrag'd to be withſtood;
Like ſome fierce lion when he meets a flood
Or trench defenſive, which his rage reſtrains
For flocks unguarded, left by careleſs ſwains:
O'er all the field he ſends his eyes afar,
To mark fit entrance for a pointed war;
Near on the right a narrow ſpace he found,
Where fun'ral aſhes ſmok'd upon the ground:
Thither the warriors of the Theban hoſt,
Whoſe martial ſkill he priz'd and valor moſt,
The monarch ſent, Chalcidamus the ſtrong,
Who from fair Theſpia led his martial throng,

Where

Where Helicon erects his verdant head,
And crowns the champaign with a lofty ſhade;
Oechalia's chief was added to the band,
For valor fam'd and ſkilful in command;
Diotimus, with him, his brother, came,
Of worth unequal, and unequal fame.
Rheſus, with theſe, the Thracian leader, went,
To merit fame by high atchievements, bent;
Of ſtature tall he ſcorns the pointed ſpear,
And cruſhes with his mace the ranks of war:
With him twelve leaders of his native train,
In combats, taught the bounding ſteed to rein,
By none ſurpaſs'd who boaſt ſuperior ſkill
To ſend the winged arrow ſwift to kill,
Mov'd to the fight. The reſt of vulgar name,
Tho' brave in combat, were unknown to fame.

Their bold invaſion dauntleſs to oppoſe,
Full in the midſt, the bulk of Ajax roſe;
Unarm'd he ſtood; but, in his mighty hand,
Brandiſh'd, with geſture fierce, a burning brand,
Snatch'd

Snatch'd from the aſhes of a fun'ral fire;
An olive's trunk, five cubit lengths entire.
Arm'd for the fight, the Cretan monarch ſtood;
And Merion, thirſting ſtill for hoſtile blood;
The prince of Ithaca, with him who led
The youth, in Sycion, and Pellene, bred.
But ere they clos'd, the Thracian leader preſt,
With eager courage, far before the reſt;
Him Ajax met, inflam'd with equal rage:
Between the wond'ring hoſts the chiefs engage;
Their weighty weapons round their heads they throw,
And ſwift, and heavy falls each thund'ring blow;
As when in Ætna's caves the giant brood,
The one-ey'd ſervants of the Lemnian god,
In order round the burning anvil ſtand,
And forge, with weighty ſtrokes, the forked brand;
The ſhaking hills their fervid toil confeſs,
And echoes rattling thro' each dark receſs:
So rag'd the fight; their mighty limbs they ſtrain;
And oft their pond'rous maces fall in vain:
For neither chief was deſtin'd yet to bleed;
But fate at laſt the victory decreed.

The

The Salaminian hero aim'd a ſtroke,
Which thund'ring on the Thracian helmet broke;
Stun'd by the boiſt'rous ſhock the warrior reel'd
With giddy poiſe, then ſunk upon the field.
Their leader to defend, his native train
With ſpeed advance, and guard him on the plain.
Againſt his foe, their threat'ning launces riſe,
And aim'd at once, a ſtorm of arrows flies;
Around the chief on ev'ry ſide they ſing;
One in his ſhoulder fix'd its barbed ſting.
Amaz'd he ſtood, nor could the fight renew;
But ſlow and ſullen from the foe withdrew.
Straight to the charge Idomeneus proceeds,
With hardy Merion try'd in martial deeds,
Laertes' valiant ſon, and he who led
The youth in Sycion, and Pellene, bred:
With force united, theſe the foe ſuſtain,
And waſteful havoc loads the purple plain:
In doubtful poiſe the ſcales of combat ſway'd,
And various fates alternately obey'd.

But now the flames, which barr'd th' invading foe,
Sunk to the waſted wood, in aſhes glow;

Thebes

Thebes rushes to the fight; their polish'd shields
Gleam thro' the smoke, and brighten all the fields;
Thick fly the embers, where the coursers tread,
And cloudy volumes all the welkin shade.
The king of men, to meet the tempest, fires
His wav'ring bands, and valor thus inspires.
Gods! shall one fatal hour deface the praise
Of all our sleepless nights, and bloody days?
Shall no just meed for all our toils remain?
Our labors, blood, and victories in vain?
Shall Creon triumph, and his impious brow
Claim the fair wreath, to truth and valor due?
No, warriors! by the heav'nly pow'rs, is weigh'd
Justice with wrong, in equal balance laid:
From JOVE's high roof depend th' eternal scales,
Wrong mounts defeated still, and right prevails.
Fear then no odds; on heav'n itself depend,
Which falshood will confound, and truth defend.

HE said; and sudden in the shock they close,
Their shields and helmets ring with mutual blows:

Disorder

Disorder dire the mingling ranks confounds,
And shouts of triumph mix with dying sounds;
As fire, with wasteful conflagration, spreads,
And kindles, in its course, the woodland shades,
When, shouting sudden from the clouds above,
On some thick forest fall the flames of JOVE;
The lofty oaks, the pines and cedars burn,
Their verdant honors all to ashes turn;
Loud roars the tempest; and the trembling swains
See the wide havoc of the wasted plains:
Such seem'd the conflict; such the dire alarms,
From shouts of battle mix'd with din of arms.
Phericles first, Lycaon's valiant son,
The sage whose counsels prop'd the Theban throne,
Rose in the fight, superior to the rest,
And brave Democleon's fall his might confest,
The chief and leader of a valiant band,
From fair Eione and th' Asinian strand.
Next Asius, Iphitus, and Crates fell;
Terynthian Podius trode the path to hell:
And Schedius, from Mazeta's fruitful plain,
Met there his fate, and perish'd with the slain.

Aw'd

Aw'd by their fall, the Argive bands give way;
As yields some rampart to the ocean's sway,
When rous'd to rage, it scorns opposing mounds,
And sweeps victorious thro' forbidden grounds.

But Pallas, anxious for her fav'rite host,
Their best already wounded, many lost,
Ulysses sought; she found him, in the rear,
Wounded and faint, and leaning on his spear.
And thus in Mentor's form: Brave prince! I dread
Our hopes defeated, and our fall decreed:
For conqu'ring on the right the foe prevails,
And all defence against their fury fails;
While here, in doubtful poise, the battle hings;
Faint is the host and wounded half the kings,
For flight prepar'd; when Creon shall renew
The bloody shock, and victory pursue.
If great Tydides, who beholds from far
Our danger imminent, yet shuns the war,
Held by resentment, or some cause unknown,
And, with the gen'ral wreck, incurs his own,

Would

Would riſe to aid us; yet we might reſpire,
And Creon, fruſtrated, again retire.
Great were his praiſe, who could the chief perſuade,
In peril ſo extreme, the hoſt to aid.
The fitteſt you, who boaſt the happy ſkill,
With pleaſing words, to move the fixed will:
Tho' Neſtor juſtly merits equal fame,
A friend the ſooneſt will a friend reclaim.

The Goddeſs thus: and thus Ulyſſes ſaid:
I cannot hope the hero to perſuade:
The ſource unknown from which his rage proceeds,
Reaſon in vain from looſe conjecture pleads;
The fatal truce, with faithleſs Creon made,
Provokes him not, nor holds him from our aid;
He eaſily reſign'd whate'er he mov'd,
Till now, approving as the reſt approv'd,
Some dire diſaſter, ſome diſgrace unſeen,
Confounds his ſteady temper, elſe ſerene:
But with my utmoſt ſearch, I'll ſtrive to find
The ſecret griefs which wound his gen'rous mind;

If drain'd of blood, and ſpent with toils of war,
My weary limbs can bear their load ſo far.

He ſpoke; his words the martial maid admir'd;
With influence divine his breaſt inſpir'd;
Lightly the hero mov'd, and took his way
Where broad encamp'd th' Etolian warriors lay:
Already arm'd he found the daring band,
Fierce and impatient of their lord's command;
Some, murm'ring, round the king's pavilion ſtood,
While others, more remote, complain'd aloud!
With pleaſing words he ſooth'd them as he went,
And ſought their valiant leader in his tent:
Him pond'ring deep in his diſtracted mind,
He found, and ſitting ſad, with head declin'd.
He thus addreſs'd him: Will the news, I bring,
Afflict, or gratify, th' Etolian king?
"That wav'ring on the brink of foul defeat,
To Creon's perfidy reſign'd by fate,
Our valiant bands th' unequal fight maintain;
Their beſt already wounded, many ſlain."

If

If treach'rous Thebes has brib'd you with her ſtore,
And bought the venal faith which once you ſwore;
Has promis'd precious ore, or lovely dames,
And pays to luſt the price which treaſon claims:
Name but the proffers of the perjur'd king,
And more, and better, from your friends I'll bring;
Vaſt ſums of precious ore and greater far
Than Thebes, in peace, had treaſur'd for the war;
Or, tho', to gratify thy boundleſs mind,
Her private wealth and public were combin'd.
If beauty's pow'r your am'rous heart inflames,
Unrival'd are Achaia's lovely dames;
Her faireſt dames Adraſtus ſhall beſtow,
And purchaſe thus the aid you freely owe.
Gods! that our armies e'er ſhould need to fear
Deſtruction, and the ſon of Tydeus near!

ULYSSES thus; and Tydeus' ſon again:
Your falſe reproaches aggravate my pain
Too great already: in my heart I feel
Its venom'd ſting, more ſharp than pointed ſteel.

No

No bribe persuades, or promise from the foe,
My oath to violate, and the war forgo:
In vain for this were all the precious store,
Which trading Zidon wafts from shore to shore;
With all that rich Iberia yet contains
Safe and unrifled in her golden veins.
The source from which my miseries arise,
The cause, which to the host my aid denies,
With truth I shall relate; and hope to claim
Your friendly sympathy, for groundless blame.
In yonder walls a captive maid remains,
To me more dear than all the world contains;
Fairer she is than nymph was ever fair;
Pallas in stature and majestic air;
As Venus soft, with Cynthia's sprightly grace,
When on Taygetus she leads the chace,
Or Erymanthus; while in fix'd amaze,
At awful distance held, the satyrs gaze.
With oaths divine our plighted faith we bound;
Hymen had soon our mutual wishes crown'd;
When, call'd to arms, against the Theban tow'rs
From Calydon I led my martial pow'rs.

Her

Her female form in martial arms conceal'd,
With me she brav'd the terrors of the field;
Unknown and unrewarded, from my side
No toil could drive her, and no shock divide.
But now proud Thebes injuriously detains
The lovely virgin, lock'd in hostile chains;
Doom'd, and reserv'd to perish, for my sake,
If of your counsels I, or works partake;
Till twenty mornings in the east shall rise,
And twenty evenings gild the western skies.
See then the cause which holds me, and confines
My arms to aid you, tho' my heart inclines;
Love mix'd with pity, whose restraints I feel
Than adamant more strong, and links of steel.

The hero thus Laertes' son reply'd:
Oft have I heard what now is verify'd,
That still when passion reigns without control,
Its fury confounds and darkens all the soul.
If Thebes, by perjury, the gods provok'd,
The vengeance slighted, by themselves invok'd;

Assaulted

Aſſaulted us, ſecure, with hoſtile arms,
And mix'd our pious rites with dire alarms:
With better faith, by faithleſs Creon ſway'd,
Will they at laſt reſtore the captive maid?
When from their battlements and lofty ſpires,
They ſee their champaign ſhine with hoſtile fires:
And, pitch'd around them, hoſts of armed foes,
With ſtrict embrace, their ſtrait'ned walls incloſe?
The gods they ſcorn as impotent, and vain:
What will they do, when you alone remain?
Our princes fall'n, the vulgar warriors fled,
Shall to your tent the captive fair be led?
Or rather muſt you ſee her matchleſs charms
Reſerv'd to bleſs ſome happier rival's arms;
While rage and jealouſy divide your breaſt,
No preſent friend to pity or aſſiſt?
Now rather riſe; and, ere it is too late,
Reſcue our armies from impending fate.
The captive maid uninjur'd you'll regain;
Force oft obtains what juſtice aſks in vain:
Thus with ſucceſs your wiſhes ſhall be crown'd,
Which truſt in Thebes would fruſtrate and confound.

ULYSSES

ULYSSES thus: his weighty words inclin'd,
Long tortur'd with suspence, the hero's mind;
As settling winds the moving deep control,
And teach the wav'ring billows how to roll:
Straight from his seat th' Etolian warrior rose;
His mighty limbs the martial greaves inclose;
His breast and thighs in polish'd steel he dress'd;
A plumed helmet next his temples press'd;
The various baldric round his shoulders flung;
His shining sword, and starry faulcion hung;
The spear he last assum'd, and pond'rous shield,
With martial grace, and issu'd to the field:
To mingle in the fight, with eager haste,
He rush'd, and call'd his warriors as he past.
Ulysses these conven'd; his prudent care
Their ranks dispos'd, and led them to the war.
Afar distinguish'd by his armor bright,
With shouts Tydides rous'd the ling'ring fight;
Thro' all the host his martial voice resounds,
And ev'ry heart with kindling ardor bounds;
As when the sun ascends, with gladsome ray,
To light the weary trav'ler on his way;

Or

Or chear the mariner by tempeſts toſt
Amidſt the dangers of ſome perilous coaſt:
So to his wiſhing friends Tydides came;
Their danger ſuch before, their joy the ſame.

Phericles ſaw; and, ſpringing from the throng,
Call'd the bold Thebans, as he ruſh'd along:
Ye gen'rous youths! whom fair Bœotia breeds,
The nurſe of valor and heroic deeds;
Let not, tho' oft renew'd, theſe tedious toils
Your martial ardor quench, and damp your ſouls.
Tydides comes; and leads, in armor bright,
His native bands, impatient for the fight;
Myſelf the firſt the hero's arm ſhall try,
Or teach you how to conquer, or to die.
We ſtrive not now, as when, in days of peace,
Some prince's hymeneal rites to grace,
In liſted fields bedew'd with fragrant oil,
In combat feign'd, the mimic warriors toil;
Alike the victors, and the vanquiſh'd fare,
And genial feaſts, to both, conclude the war.

We now muſt conquer; or it ſtands decreed
That Thebes ſhall periſh, and her people bleed.
No hopes of peace remain; nor can we find
New gods to witneſs, or new oaths to bind,
The firſt infring'd: and therefore muſt prepare
To ſtand or periſh by the die of war.
Then let us all undaunted meet our fate:
To ſtop is doubtful, deſp'rate to retreat.

The hero thus; and to the battle led;
Like Mars, he ſeem'd, in radiant armor clad,
Tow'ring ſublime, behind his ample ſhield,
He mov'd to meet Tydides on the field:
As when at noon, deſcending to the rills,
Two herds encounter, from the neighb'ring hills;
Before the reſt, the rival bulls prepare,
With awful prelude, for th' approaching war;
With deſp'rate horns they plough the ſmoaking ground;
Their hideous roar the hollow caves reſound;
Heav'd o'er their backs the ſtreaming land aſcends;
Their ſtern encounter both the herds ſuſpends:

So met the chiefs; and such amazement quell'd
The rest, and in suspence the combat held.
Tydides first his weighty weapon threw,
Wide of the mark with erring force it flew.
Phericles! thine succeeds with happier aim,
Full to the center of the shield it came:
But slightly join'd, unequal to the stroke,
Short from the steel, the staff in splinters broke.
With grief Tydides saw his aim deceiv'd;
From off the field a pond'rous rock he heav'd;
With figures rude of antique sculpture grac'd,
It mark'd the reliques of a man deceas'd.
Push'd at his foe the weighty mass he flung;
Thund'ring it fell; the Theban helmet rung:
Deep with the brain the dinted steel it mix'd,
And lifeless, on the ground, the warrior fix'd.

AW'D by his fall, the Theban bands retire;
As flocks defenceless shun a lion's ire;
At once they yield, unable to withstand
The wide destruction of Tydides' hand.

Disorder

Disorder soon, the form of war confounds,
And shouts of triumph mix with dying sounds.
Creon descry'd, where ruling on the right
In equal poise he held the scales of fight,
His pow'rs defeated, and himself depriv'd
Of hopes of conquest, not to be retriev'd:
The gods he curs'd, and impiously resign'd,
To stern despair, his unsubmitting mind:
Yet, vers'd in all the various turns of fate,
The brisk assault to rule, or safe retreat,
He drew his firm battalions from the foe,
In martial order, regularly slow.
The Argive leaders, thund'ring in the rear,
Still forwards on the yielding squadrons bear:
The strife with unabated fury burns,
They stop, they combat, and retreat by turns;
As the grim lion sourly leaves the plains,
By dogs compell'd, and bands of armed swains;
Indignant to his woody haunts he goes,
And with retorted glare restrains his foes.

MEAN while Tydides, near the Cadmean gate,
Urg'd with incessant toil the work of fate:
Towards the walls, an undistinguish'd throng,
The victors and the vanquish'd, rush'd along.
The guarded wall to both access denies;
From ev'ry tow'r, a storm of jav'lins flies;
Thick as the hail descends, when Boreas flings
The rattling tempest from his airy wings:
So thick the jav'lins fell, and pointed spears;
Behind them close, another host appears,
In order'd columns rang'd, by Creon led:
Ulysses saw; and thus to Diomed:
Bold as you are, avoid these guarded tow'rs,
From loose pursuit recal your scatter'd pow'rs:
See Creon comes; his thick embattel'd train,
In phalanx join'd, approaches from the plain.
Here if we stay th' unequal fight to prove,
The tow'rs and ramparts threaten from above
With darts and stones; while to th' invading foe,
In order loose, our scatter'd ranks we show:
Nor by your matchless valor hope, in vain,
Such odds to conquer, and the fight maintain;

Against

Against an army single force must lose;
Immod'rate courage still like folly shows.
See where into the field yon turret calls,
Drawn to a point the long-extended walls:
There force your way, and speedily regain
The space, and safety of the open plain.

Ulysses thus; and, by his prudence sway'd,
The martial son of Tydeus straight obey'd.
Thrice to the height the hero rais'd his voice,
Loud as the silver trumpet's martial noise,
The signal of retreat; his warriors heard,
And round their chief in order'd ranks appear'd,
Drawn from the mingled tumult of the plain;
As, sever'd on the floor, the golden grain
Swells to a heap; while, whirling thro' the skies,
The dusty chaff in thick disorder flies;
Tydides leads, between the guarded tow'rs
And hostile ranks, he draws his martial pow'rs
Towards the plain; as mariners, with oars
And sails, avoid some promontory's shores;

When

When, catch'd betweeen the ocean and the land,
A sudden tempest bears them on the strand;
The stem opposing to its boist'rous sway,
They shun the cape and stretch into the bay:
So scap'd Tydides. Cover'd by their tow'rs,
In safety stood retir'd the Theban pow'rs,
For from above an iron tempest rain'd,
And the incursions of the foe restrain'd.

THE

THE

EPIGONIAD.

BOOK IX.

AND now the king of men his army calls
Back from the danger of th' impending walls;
They quit the combat, and in order long
The field poſſeſs, a phalanx deep and ſtrong.
Rank following rank, the Theban ſquadrons move
Still to the rampart, and the tow'rs above;
Creon himſelf, unwilling quits the field,
By gods adverſe, and fate, conſtrain'd to yield:
'Gainſt all his foes, his indignation burns,
But firſt on Diomed its fury turns.
He call'd a vulgar warrior from the crowd,
A villain dark, and try'd in works of blood,
Erembus nam'd, of huge gigantic ſize,
With cloudy features mark'd, and down caſt eyes;

Cold

Cold and inactive ſtill in combat found,
Nor taught to kindle at the trumpet's ſound;
But bold in villainy when pow'r commands;
A weapon fitted for a tyrant's hands.
And thus the angry monarch: Take this ſword,
A ſign, to all my ſervants, from their lord;
And hither bring the fair Etolian's head;
I, who command you, will reward the deed:
But let not pity, or remorſe, prevail;
Your own ſhall anſwer, if in aught you fail.

He ſaid: the murtherer, practis'd to obey,
The royal ſword receiv'd, and took his way
Straight to the palace, where the captive fair,
Of hope bereft, and yielding to deſpair,
Lamenting ſat. Their mutual griefs to blend,
The queen and all the royal maids attend.
And thus the queen: Fair ſtranger! ſhall your grief
All hopes reject of comfort and relief?
Your woes I've meaſur'd, all your ſorrows known;
And find them light when balanc'd with my own.

In

In one ſad day my valiant ſire I mourn'd;
My brothers ſlain; my native walls o'erturn'd;
Myſelf a captive, deſtin'd to fulfill,
In ſervile drudgery, a maſter's will;
Yet to a fall ſo low, the gods decreed
This envy'd height of greatneſs to ſucceed.
The pow'rs above, for purpoſes unknown,
Oft raiſe the fall'n, and bring the lofty down;
Elude the vigilance of all our care:
Our ſureſt hopes deceive, and mock deſpair.
Let no deſponding thoughts your mind poſſeſs,
To baniſh hope, the med'cine of diſtreſs:
For nine ſhort days your freedom will reſtore,
And break the bondage which you thus deplore.
But I, alas! unhappy ſtill, muſt mourn
Joys once poſſeſs'd, which never can return;
Four valiant ſons, who periſh'd on the plain
In this dire ſtrife, a fifth on Oeta ſlain:
Theſe ſhall return to bleſs my eyes no more;
The grave's dark manſion knows not to reſtore,
Nor time, which bids ſo oft the ſolar ray
Repeat, with light renew'd, th' ethereal way,

And from the foil, by heat and vernal winds,
To fecond life the latent plant unbinds,
Again to flourifh, nurs'd by wholefome dews,
Ever to mortal man his life renews.
Thefe griefs are fure; but others ftill I fear;
A royal hufband loft, and bondage near;
Myfelf, my daughters, drag'd by hoftile hands;
Our dignity exchang'd for fervile bands:
All this the gods may purpofe, and fulfill;
And we with patience muft endure their will.

As thus Laodice her forrow, try'd,
With fympathy, to footh; the maid reply'd:
Great queen! on whom the fov'reign pow'rs beftow
A gen'rous heart to feel another's woe;
Let ftill untouch'd thro' life your honours laft,
With happier days to come for forrows paft!
Yet ftrive not thus a hopelefs wretch to chear,
Whom fure conjecture leads the worft to fear.
Shall Diomed a public caufe forgive,
His faithful friends betray, and feafts a foe?

By

By treachery behold the hoſt o'erthrown,
And with the gen'ral wreck, incur his own?
Shall kings and armies, in the balance laid,
Avail not to out-weigh a ſingle maid?
One, whom his fury falſely did reprove
For crimes unknown, whoſe only crime was love:
No, ſure ere this he triumphs in the field;
Your armies to his matchleſs valor yield:
And ſoon ſubmitting to the fatal blow,
This head muſt gratify a vanquiſh'd foe.
If ſymbols e'er the ſecret fates explain,
If viſions do not always warn in vain,
If dreams do ever true prognoſtics prove,
And dreams, the ſages ſay, deſcend from Jove,
My fate approaches: Late at dead of night;
My veins yet freeze with horror and affright!
I thought that, all forſaken and alone,
Penſive I wand'red far thro' ways unknown;
A gloomy twilight, neither night nor day
Frown'd on my ſteps, and ſadden'd all the way:
Long dreary vales I ſaw on ev'ry ſide,
And caverns ſinking deep, with entrance wide;

On

On ragged clifts the blasted forests hung;
Her baleful note the boding screech-owl sung.
At last, with many a weary step, I found
This melancholy country's outmost bound,
An ocean vast: upon a clift I stood,
And saw, beneath me far, the sable flood;
No islands rose the dull expanse to grace,
And nought was seen, thro' all the boundless space,
But low-brow'd clouds, which on the billows frown'd,
And, in a night of shade, the prospect drown'd.
The winds, which seem'd around the cliffs to blow,
With doleful cadence, utter'd sounds of woe,
Wafting, from ev'ry cave and dreary den,
The wail of infants mix'd with groans of men:
Amaz'd, on ev'ry side my eyes I turn,
And see depending from the craggy bourn
Wretches unnumber'd; some the mould'ring soil,
Some grasp'd the slipp'ry rock, with fruitless toil;
Some dangled by the slender roots, which pass
Thro' crannies of the cliffs, or wither'd grass.
Still from the steep they plung'd into the main;
As from the eves descends the trickling rain.

Amaz'd

Amaz'd I turn'd, and ſtrove in vain to fly;
Thickets oppos'd, and precipices high
To ſtop my flight: and, from the airy ſteep,
A tempeſt ſnatch'd, and hurl'd me to the deep.
The ſudden violence my ſlumber broke;
The waves I ſeem'd to touch, and ſtraight awoke.
With ſleep the viſion fled; but, in my mind,
Imprinted deep, its image left behind.
For had the frightful ſcene which fancy drew,
And what I ſeem'd to ſuffer, all been true;
Had fate appear'd, in blackeſt colors dreſs'd,
No deeper had its horrors been impreſs'd.
When thus the gods by certain ſymbols warn,
And ſure, from dreams, their purpoſes we learn,
No blame I merit, that to fear reſign'd,
Fate's dread approach ſits heavy on my mind.
Cassandra thus; Laodice again:
In dreams our fate to find, we ſeek in vain;
For oft, from thoughts diſturb'd, ſuch phantoms riſe,
As fogs from marſhes climb, to blot the ſkies:
With a dark veil, the chearful face of day
They ſadden, and eclipſe the ſolar ray;

But

But ſoon, in dews and ſoft deſcending rains,
Fall to refreſh the mountains and the plains.
For Diomed's offence you ne'er can bleed;
Favor, your ſex and innocence will plead,
Ev'n with the worſt; nor will a gen'rous foe
His rage, in cruelty and baſeneſs, ſhow.
Now to the tow'rs I haſte, to view from far
The danger, or ſucceſs of this day's war.
Let Clymene with me the walls aſcend;
The reſt at home domeſtic cares attend.

SHE ended thus; and from her ſeat aroſe;
The royal maid attends her, as ſhe goes
Towards the Cadmean gate; where full to view
Expos'd, the armies and the camp ſhe knew.
And now appear'd within the lofty gate,
By Creon ſent, the meſſenger of fate.
His ſhining blade, for execution bar'd,
And aſpect dark, his purpoſe ſtraight declar'd.
Alarm'd, at once the royal virgins riſe,
And ſcatt'ring, fill the dome with female cries:

But,

But, bolder from deſpair, Caſſandra ſtaid,
And to the aſſaſſin, undaunted, ſaid:
Approach! divide this neck with deathful ſteel,
A tyrant's vaſſal no remorſe ſhould feel.
O Diomed! let this example prove,
In man, that ſtubborn honor conquers love:
With weight ſuperior, great ambition draws
The ſcale for glory, and a public cauſe.
I blame thee not for this; nor will impeach
A great example, which I could not reach:
For had whole armies, in the balance laid,
And kings and mighty ſtates with thee been weigh'd,
And I the judge appointed to decree,
They all had periſhed to ranſom thee.
Caſſandra thus; and for the blow prepar'd,
With both her hands, her ſhining neck ſhe bar'd,
And round her head a purple garment roll'd,
With leaves of ſilver mark'd, and flowers of gold.
Rais'd for the ſtroke, the glittering faulchion hung,
And ſwift deſcending, bore the head along.
A tide of gore, diffus'd in purple ſtreams,
Daſhes the wall, and o'er the pavement ſwims,

Prone

Prone to the ground the headleſs trunk reclines,
And life, in long convulſive throbs, reſigns.

Now on the open plain before the walls,
The king of men the chiefs to council calls.
And Diomed with ſecret griefs oppreſs'd,
Impatient, thus the public ear addreſs'd:
Confed'rate kings! and thou, whoſe ſov'reign hand
Sways the dread ſcepter of ſupreme command!
What holds us, and reſtrains our martial pow'rs;
While haughty Thebes inſults us, from her tow'rs?
In vain we conquer thus, and bleed in vain,
If victory but yields the empty plain.
Behind his walls, perfidious Creon lies,
And ſafely meditates a new ſurprize.
When on the urn our pious tears we pour;
Or mirth diſarms us, and the genial hour;
No; let us rather, now when fortune calls,
With bold aſſault, attempt to mount the walls;
Myſelf the firſt a choſen band ſhall lead,
Where yon low rampart ſinks into the mead:

There

There will I gain the battlements, and lay,
For others to ſucceed, an open way,
If bars of ſteel have force their works to tear,
Or, from their hinges heav'd the gates, can bear.

TYDIDES thus. His counſel to oppoſe,
The leader of the Cretan warriors roſe:
Confed'rate kings! and thou, whoſe ſov'reign hand
Sways the dread ſcepter of ſupreme command!
Let not Tydides now, with martial rage,
In meaſures hot and raſh, the hoſt engage;
To ſober reaſon, ſtill let paſſion yield,
Nor here, admit the ardor of the field:
If Thebes could thus with one aſſault be won,
Her armies vanquiſh'd, and her walls o'erthrown;
Could this one ſignal day reward our toil,
So long endur'd, with victory and ſpoil:
No ſoldier in the ranks, no leader here,
Would ſhun the fight or counſel to forbear.
But if for victory, a foul defeat,
With all the ſhame and danger of retreat,

Should be the iſſue, which the wiſe muſt dread,
To pauſe is better, ſure, than to proceed.
On yonder walls and lofty turrets, ſtand,
Not, ſav'd from ſhameful flight, a heartleſs band;
Who, deſp'rate of their ſtate, would ſoon forgoe
Their laſt defences, and admit the foe;
But, who, from fight recal'd, without diſmay,
A ſafe retreat maintain'd, in firm array.
Secure they combat from protecting walls;
Thrown from above each weapon heavier falls:
Againſt ſuch odds, can we the fight maintain,
And with a foe found equal on the plain?
Though we deſiſt, no leader will oppoſe
That thus the fruits of victory we loſe;
When, pent within their battlements and tow'rs,
In narrow ſpace, we hold the Theban pow'rs:
For oftner, than by arms, are hoſts o'erthrown
By dearth and ſickneſs, in a ſtrait'ned town.
He who can only wield the ſword and ſpear,
Knows leſs than half the inſtruments of war.
Heart-gnawing hunger, enemy to life,
Wide-waſting peſtilence, and civil ſtrife,

By

By want inflam'd, to all our weapons claim
Superior force, and strike with surer aim:
With these, whoever arm'd to combat goes,
Instructed how to turn them on his foes,
Shall see them soon laid prostrate on the ground,
And all his hopes, with final conquest, crown'd.
Our warriors, therefore, let us straight recal,
Nor, by assault, attempt to force the wall;
But with a rampart, to the gates oppos'd,
Besiege, in narrow space, our foes inclos'd.

The hero thus; and, eager to reply,
Tydides rose: when on a turret nigh
Creon appear'd; Cassandra's head, display'd
Upon a launce's point, he held, and said:
Ye Argive warriors! view this sign; and know,
That Creon never fails to quit a foe.
This bloody trophy mark; and if it brings
Grief and despair to any of the kings;
Let him revenge it on the man who broke
His faith, and dar'd my fury to provoke.

HE ended thus. Tydides, as he heard,
With rage distracted, and despair, appear'd.
Long on the tow'r he fix'd his burning eyes;
The rest were mute with wonder and surprize;
And, to the council turning, thus at last:
If any favor claim my merits past;
If, by a present benefit, ye'd bind
To future services a grateful mind;
Let, what I urge, in council now prevail,
With hostile arms yon rampart to assail:
Else, with my native bands, alone I'll try
The combat, fix'd to conquer or to die.

THE hero thus. Ulysses thus addrest,
Who only knew the secrets of his breast:
Princes! shall dire contention still preside
In all our councils, and the kings divide?
For, of the various ills that can distress
United armies and prevent success,
Discord is chief: where'er the fury strays,
The parts she severs and the whole betrays.

Now

Now let Tydides lead his native pow'rs
To combat, and aſſault the Theban tow'rs;
The reſt, on various parts, their forces ſhow,
By mock approaches to diſtract the foe.
If he prevails, to victory he leads;
And ſafe behind him all the hoſt ſucceeds:
If JOVE forbids and all-decreeing fate,
The field is open, and a ſafe retreat.

ULYSSES thus. The princes all aſſent;
Straight from the council thro' the hoſt they went,
Review'd its order, and in front diſpos'd
The ſlingers, and the rear with bowmen clos'd;
Arming the reſt with all that could avail,
The tow'rs and battlements to ſap or ſcale.
Tydides firſt his martial ſquadrons leads;
Ulyſſes, with his native band, ſucceeds.
Upon them, as they came, the Thebans pour
A ſtorm of jav'lins, ſhot from ev'ry tow'r;
As from the naked heights the feather'd kind,
By bitter ſhow'rs compel'd, and wintry wind,

In

In clouds assembled, on some mountain's head,
To shelter crowd, and dive into the shade:
Such and so thick the winged weapons flew,
And many warriors wounded, many slew.
Now on their ranks, by forceful engines thrown,
Springs, from the twisted rope, the pond'rous stone,
With wide destruction thro' the host to roll,
To mix its order and confound the whole.

INTREPID still th' Etolian chief proceeds;
And still Ulysses follows as he leads.
They reach'd the wall. Tydides, with a bound,
Twice strove in vain to mount it from the ground.
Twice fled the foe; as, to the boist'rous sway
Of some proud billow, mariners give way;
Which, rous'd by tempests, 'gainst a vessel bends
Its force, and mounting o'er the deck ascends:
Again he rose: the third attempt prevail'd;
But, crumbling in his grasp, the rampart fail'd:
For thunder there its fury had imprest,
And loos'd a shatter'd fragment from the rest.

Supine

Supine upon the earth the hero falls,
Mix'd with the ſmoke and ruin of the walls.
By diſappointment chaff'd, and fierce from pain,
Unable now the rampart to regain,
He turn'd, and ſaw th' Etolian warriors fled,
Diſpers'd as fear, and hopes of ſafety led.
From Creon ſtraight and Thebes, his anger turns,
And 'gainſt his friends, with equal fury, burns;
As when, from ſnows diſſolv'd or ſudden rains,
A torrent ſwells and roars along the plains;
If, riſing to oppoſe its angry tide,
In full career, it meets a mountain's ſide;
In foaming eddies, backwards to its ſource,
It wheels, and rages with inverted courſe:
So turn'd at once, the fury, in his breaſt,
Againſt Ulyſſes, thus itſelf expreſt:
Author accurs'd, and ſource of all my woes!
Friend more pernicious than the worſt of foes!
By thy ſuggeſtions from my purpoſe ſway'd,
I ſlew Caſſandra, and myſelf betray'd;
Hence, lodg'd within this tortur'd breaſt, remains
A fury, to inflict eternal pains.

I need not follow, with vindictive ſpear,
A traitor abſent, while a worſe is near:
Creon but acted what you well foreknew,
When me unwilling to the fight you drew.
To you the firſt my vengeance ſhall proceed,
And then on Creon and myſelf ſucceed:
Such ſacrifice Caſſandra's ghoſt demands,
And ſuch I'll offer with determin'd hands.

THUS as he ſpoke, Ulyſſes pond'ring ſtood,
Whether by art to ſooth his furious mood,
Or, with a ſudden hand, his launce to throw,
Preventing, ere it fell, the threat'ned blow.
But, gliding from above, the martial maid
Between them ſtood, in majeſty diſplay'd;
Her radiant eyes with indignation burn'd,
On Diomed their piercing light ſhe turn'd:
And frowning thus: Thy frantic rage reſtrain;
Elſe by dread Styx I ſwear, nor ſwear in vain,
That proof ſhall teach you whether mortal might
This arm invincible can match in fight.

Is't not enough that he, whose hoary hairs
Still watch'd your welfare with a father's cares,
Who dar'd, with zeal and courage, to withstand
Your fatal phrenzy, perish'd by your hand?
That, slighting ev'ry tie which princes know,
You leagu'd in secret with a public foe?
And, from your faith by fond affection sway'd,
The kings, the army, and yourself betray'd?
Yet, unreclaim'd, from such atrocious deeds,
To more and worse your desp'rate rage proceeds,
And dooms to perish, by a mad decree,
The chief who sav'd alike the host and thee.
Had Thebes prevail'd, and one decisive hour
The victory had fix'd beyond thy pow'r;
These limbs, ere now had captive fetters worn,
To infamy condemn'd, and hostile scorn;
While fair Cassandra, with her virgin charms,
A prize decreed, had blest some rival's arms.
Did not the worth of mighty Tydeus plead,
Whom living much I lov'd, and honor dead,
For favor to his guilty son, and stand
A rampart to oppose my vengeful hand;

You ſoon had found, how mad it is to wage
War with the gods, and rouſe immortal rage.
This Thebes ſhall know, ere to the ocean's ſtreams
The ſun again withdraws his ſetting beams;
For now the gods conſent, in vengeance juſt,
For all her crimes, to mix her with the duſt.
The Goddeſs thus; and turning to the field,
Her deity in Mentor's form conceal'd,
From flight recal'd, and join'd the ſcatt'red band;
They ſtop, they turn, again in order ſtand;
A preſent deity each heart inſpires,
And wakes again, in all, their martial fires.

Conscious of wrong, and ſpeechleſs from ſurprize,
Tydides ſtood, nor dar'd to lift his eyes,
Of fate regardleſs; tho' from ev'ry tow'r,
Stones, darts, and arrows fell, a mingled ſhow'r:
For awe divine ſubdu'd him, and the ſhame
Which virtue ſuffers from the touch of blame.
But to Ulyſſes turning, thus at laſt:
Prince! can thy gen'rous love forget the paſt;

And

And all remembrance banish from thy mind,
Of what my fury and despair design'd?
If you forgive me, straight our pow'rs recall
From flight; while I again attempt the wall.
Some present god inspires me; for I feel
My heart exulting knock the plated steel:
In brisker rounds the vital spirit flies,
And ev'ry limb, with double force, supplies.

TYDIDES thus. Ulysses thus again:
Shall heav'n forgive offences, man retain;
Tho' born to err, by jarring passions tost?
The best, in good no steadiness, can boast:
No malice therefore in my heart shall live;
To sin is human; human to forgive.
But do not now your single force oppose
To lofty ramparts, and an host of foes;
Let me at least, attending at your side,
Partake the danger, and the toil divide:
For see our pow'rs advancing to the storm!
Pallas excites them in a mortal form.

Let

Let us, to mount the rampart, ſtraight proceed;
And they themſelves will follow as we lead.

ULYSSES thus; and, ſpringing from the ground,
Both chiefs at once aſcend the lofty mound.
Before him each his ſhining buckler bears
'Gainſt flying darts, and thick protended ſpears.
Now, on the bulwark's level top, they ſtand,
And charge on ev'ry ſide the hoſtile band:
There many warriors in cloſe fight they ſlew,
And many headlong from the rampart threw.
Pallas her fav'rite champions ſtill inſpires,
Their nerves confirms, and wakes their martial fires.
With courſe divided, on the foe they fall,
And bare between them leave a length of wall;
As fire, when kindled on ſome mountain's head,
Where runs, in long extent, the woodland ſhade,
Conſumes the middle foreſt, and extends
Its parted progreſs to the diſtant ends:
So fought the leaders; while their ſcatt'red pow'rs,
In phalanx join'd, approach'd the Theban tow'rs;

With

With hands, and heads againſt the rampart lean'd,
The firſt, upon their ſhields, the reſt ſuſtain'd:
Rank above rank the living ſtructure grows,
As ſettling bees the pendent heap compoſe,
Which in ſome ſhade or vaulted cavern, hings,
Woven thick with complicated feet and wings:
Thus mutually ſuſtain'd, the warriors bend;
While o'er their heads the order'd ranks aſcend.

And now the martial goddeſs with delight,
Plac'd on a turret's top, ſurvey'd the fight.
Thrice to the height, ſhe rais'd her awful voice;
The tow'rs and bulwarks trembled at the noiſe:
Both warring hoſts alike the ſignal hear;
To this, the cauſe of hope, to that, of fear.
And Theſeus thus addreſs'd his martial train:
Here ſhall we wage a diſtant war in vain,
When now Tydides, from the conquer'd tow'rs
Deſcending, on the town his ſquadrons pours?
Your glory if ye would aſſert, not yield
At once the praiſe of many a well-fought field;

Aſcend

Aſcend theſe lofty battlements, and claim
With thoſe who conquer now an equal fame.
The monarch thus; and to the combat leads;
With emulation fir'd the hoſt proceeds;
Under a ſhow'r of falling darts they go,
Climb the ſteep ramparts, and aſſault the foe;
As winds outrageous, from the ocean wide,
Againſt ſome mole impel the ſtormy tide,
Whoſe rocky arms, oppoſed to the deep,
From tempeſts, ſafe the anchoring veſſel keep;
Wave heap'd on wave, the ſtormy deluge tow'rs,
And o'er it, with reſiſtleſs fury, pours:
Such ſeem'd the fight, the Theban hoſt o'erthrown,
The wall deſerts, and mingles with the town.

Creon in vain the deſp'rate rout withſtands,
With ſharp reproaches and vindictive hands;
His rage they ſhun not, nor his threatnings hear,
From ſtunning clamors deaf, and blind from fear.
And thus the monarch with uplifted eyes,
And both his hands extended to the ſkies:

Ye

Ye Pow'rs supreme, whose unresisted sway
The fates of men and mortal things obey!
Against your counsels, vain it is to strive,
Which only ruin nations or retrieve.
Here in your sight, with patience, I resign
That envy'd royalty which once was mine;
Renounce the cares, that wait upon a crown,
And make my last attention all my own.
Seven virgin daughters in my house remain,
Who must not live to swell a victor's train;
Nor shall my wretched queen, in triumph borne,
Be lifted to the eye of public scorn:
One common fate our miseries shall end,
And, with the dust of Thebes, our ashes blend.

His fix'd decree the monarch thus exprest;
One half the fates confirm'd, deny'd the rest:
For now surrounded by the hostile crowd
His captive queen, an humble suppliant, stood.
Tydides found her as she left the walls;
Before the hero to the ground she falls;

With

With trembling hands, his mighty knees she press'd,
And, supplicating, thus with tears address'd:
Illustrious chief! for sure your gallant mien
No less proclaims you, spare a wretched queen;
One whom the gods with endless hate pursue,
To griefs already sumless adding new;
O spare a helpless wretch, who humbly bends,
And for protection on thy might depends!
As supplicating thus her suit she press'd,
Ulysses heard, and thus the chief address'd:
See how th' immortals, by a just decree,
Cassandra's fall avenge, and honor thee!
See, at thy feet, the wife of Creon laid,
A victim off'red for the injur'd maid.
Let her the first your just resentment feel;
By heav'n presented to your vengeful steel.

Ulysses thus. With sighs the hero said:
Enough is off'red to Cassandra's shade;
With wide destruction, wasting sword and fire,
To plague the authors of her fall, conspire.

Yet

Yet all in vain. No ſacrifice recalls
The parted ghoſt from Pluto's gloomy walls.
Too long alas! has lawleſs fury rul'd,
To reaſon deaf, by no reflection cool'd:
While I unhappy, by its dictates ſway'd,
My guardian murder'd, and the hoſt betray'd.
No victim, therefore, to my rage I'll pay;
Nor ever follow as it points the way.

THE ſon of Tydeus thus; and to his tent,
From inſults ſafe, the royal matron ſent.
Himſelf again the courſe of conqueſt led
Till Thebes was overthrown, and Creon bled.

FINIS.